

COMMUNAL CONFIDENTIAL

By

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CHAPTER 1

“Macho Mob Boss Dies Yellow” the headline read in the Post, the picture of Frank Roselli fully revealing the ghost-like jaundiced tinge in his normally Miami-suntanned face. “Mafia Decision Maker Dies Confused,” across the top of the Daily News, demonstrating its point with a picture of Frankie ‘the boss’ aimlessly wandering the streets in front of the NYU Medical Center in his hospital gown. “Funder of Hospital Dies Outside Psych Ward He Funded”, read the New York Times in the black and white ink which was its trademark which, according to the reader of the article, smelled all too familiar.

“They lie to us with their ink, you know,” ‘Conspiracy Carlos’ warned newly arrived Newfoundlander Medical Examiner Seana Ryan. The four foot-six wrinkle-faced Hispanic custodial engineer took another puff on his bootleg Cuban cigar as he leaned back on the table in the morgue, filling the room with smoke. He watched the newby clear-complexioned blue-eyed, blonde ME with the cheerleader-Barbie hairdo suspend her breath, hold her tongue and keep her hands occupied with carefully cutting open a body which had been rendered lifeless by someone who didn’t value life, or proper surgical technique.

“There is something in the ink of the New York Times that makes us believe the lies they put into print,” the Latino janitor with the history no one was quite sure about continued as he heard someone official walking down the hallway. He crushed his cigar in the Pepsi that had gone flat hours ago, took up his broom and swept up the debris on the floor of the morgue that grossed out everyone else on his shift. “Print that sends something to the brain that makes us believe that bullshit is gospel fact. It’s a secret formula that Castro had in Cuba, and Stalin had in Russia. How else do you think those bastards kept good people doing whatever they could to do bad things to each other? That is why so many of the idiots who believe those assholes have big noses.”

“You reckon so, Carlos?” Seana asked in the Newfy lilt which passed as ‘colorful Irish’ to newly met American guys, though it was the most uneducated brand of Canadian diction possible to any potential mates in Toronto. Preparing for another Carlos rant, she brought the edges of her thin lips up a pleasant smile which was neither closed nor open, but always polite.

“When you read the words, the smell goes to your brain through the olfactorial nerve to the limbic system,” the Cuban-born elder related to the newby medico, as if he was the voice of Ramon y Cajal himself. The Hispanic founder of modern American, Russian, Canadian and German neuroscience. “You know what made me figure that out?” he continued as he swept the corners of the white room which always seemed to have a tinge of grey to it, no matter how many lights were on or how fresh the coats of ‘virgin amber’ paint. “The olfactory nerve goes directly to the cerebellum, to the part of the brain where we think. Every other sense goes through the thalamus, ya know, the part of the medulla that gets information from the eyes, ears, fingers, toes, and...parts of the anatomy which respectable young ladies like you never talk about, unless it’s with your girlfriends or your priest.” He demonstrated his point by sniffing a long whiff from a freshly open page of the paper that contained ‘all the news fit to print’, and breathed out verses of ‘What a Wonderful World’ in Spanish like a brain dead flower child on the best acid trip of his life.

Seana’s Newfy grin turned into a gentle laugh. She knew enough to not correct Carlos’ diction regarding the anatomical names of the structures in his ‘bullshit goes to brains through the nostrils’ theory, but ... Maybe it was true. No other newspaper smelled so authoritative as the New York Times, of course. Until you read the print, particularly on stories that were written from information that you gave the reporter.

Carlos invited Seana to dance to the tunes emanating from his hallototic cigar-stenched mouth. She put down the scalpel and accepted his offer. The old janitor who always smelled of three day old locker room no matter how much he showered needed someone to look at him like he was a man of value, even though under all of his boasts he didn’t value himself. This Latino patient, the only live one in the room, needed her. And Doctor Seana knew that she needed a break from slicing open John Doe #52D.

After the ten second dance was over, Carlos was called back to work by his supervisor in the hallway. Seana took a closer look at the ‘best bullshit in print’ NY Times, a journal she was also using to absorb the detritus emerging from John Doe #52D’s bowels. According to the today’s paper, Frank Roselli, a previous guest on her cutting table barely a week ago, had been doped up on LSD or some other kind of mind altering drug. According to the printed

word, mixed booze with dope. He ‘ironically, got what he deserved, as a member of a branch of the Italian Mafia that continues to make multimillion dollar profits from the billion dollar illegal drug trade.’ The reporter also noted that ‘Mister Roselli had thoughts of suicide before running in front of the truck that ran him over, and the driver of the truck was still unidentified, having been cleared of all possible criminal charges.’

“You know, the Mob hates Castro more than even I do,” Carlos boasted, popping his head back into the door while Seana was in the middle of another one of those ‘so this is how the world really works’ mini-realizations that she would not be able to do anything about. “And me and Frank Roselli talked about how to get Uncle Fidel, that Son of the Devil, out of office for good,” the singing Latino prophet of doom continued. “And that Frank told me that--”

“---I know what he told you,” Seana said, not wanting to hear the Frank Roselli story from Carlos again. Thankfully, she didn’t have to endure it. A clearing of Carlos’ boss in the hall summoned his body, mind and perspective back to work cleaning the floor near the elevator. Seana smiled a pleasant farewell to the old man who reminded her of her father, then closed the door behind her. She felt a blast of cold air from places she could not identify blowing up her grey, polyester knee-length skirt.

In front of Seana’s face was death. Walls without pictures or windows. Cold, steel tables which were designed to be cleaned. They reflected her face, and dying soul, every time she looked into them. Rather than deal with another view of her least favorite person in the mirror again, she decided to look at the articles about Frank Roselli again, and the compartment which was emptied of his body within minutes of her having delivered her preliminary report upstairs. She found herself looking to the spinner of legends as a source for facts once again.

According to Carlos, Frank was a God-fearing man who went to Mass and took Communion on Sunda. As he always did, two days before he was admitted to the hospital with stomach cramps and bloody diarrhea. Four days before his liver and kidney enzymes went up off the roof. And five days before the most even keeled member of the Roselli family went crazy, even by Carlos’ standards. Frank died on Friday with a picture of an unidentified young, blonde woman in his pocket. The same unidentified woman whose picture found its way into that of his cousin, and, according to some, distant brother when the end came for him in the isolation ward. And the other ‘Good Friday’ victims who were attended to by the Roselli’s, their personal Catholic Chaplain, and Cops who came in with more questions about other mob members than concern for finding out why they were dying .

Tox screens came back as ‘loaded with alcohol’ on three of the cases, but nothing else that was identified. The microbiology lab couldn’t find any reason for the enlargement of the spleen or destroyed liver and necrotic kidneys. Nothing of significance evident in the white blood count, differential or characteristics of the cells under the highest power microscopes Seana had at her disposal. Maybe the demise of the Roselli’s, once the most powerful mob families in Brooklyn, was just bad luck, or, as Carlos said ‘God’s Justice’.

Seana’s brain and eyes were tired, both infused with too much formalin from the corpses and from the fumes of the other agents required to preserve the parts derived from them. She opened up the refrigerator marked ‘Medical Samples Only’, retrieved her daily ration and treat of strawberry yogurt, and sat down on the foamy swivel chair which was reserved for her legs only, or Carlos’ when he decided to come in and give her ‘Canadian niece’ a lesson in world politics. She picked up the paper, thumbing through the articles for something to take her mind off the tensions of her new position, and the fear of anyone finding out what she really did and was during the ten months between jobs four years ago.

As for today...another escalation in the War in Iraq. Another domestic killing in Brooklyn which was about to be investigated. Another Russian mobster slipping away from the ‘justice’ system in Moscow, then Interpole somewhere in Poland. Another game the New York Giants blew by forfeiting a two touchdown lead during the last two minutes of regulation. And back home in ‘Mountie Land’, another dispute between the Yanks and the Canucks about fishing rights in the North Atlantic, amnesty for American Army deserters and Duty Christmas shoppers should have to pay when they cross the longest virtually unguarded international border in the world.

CHAPTER 2

The song “Under the Boardwalk” rang through Detective Boris Fedoroff’s head as he sang the happy lyrics in English, then improvized ones in Russian. A fitting pop finale to the opera that had played itself out under the planks bordering the Atlantic surf in the Easternmost portions of his jurisdiction. Three corpses covered with a generous glaze of blood, with a crystal icing of white, shiny sand. An under-aged Eurasian ‘model’ with a dog

collar around her neck and her throat under it cut execution style. A Black (or as he was required to put on the report, African American) male clad in an eight hundred dollar suit torn into Salvation Army rags by ten stabs of a blade. And last but not least, a dead White gangsta wannabe by the looks of his pale white skin, oversized pants, hat with visor turned to the side, and jewelry fresh off the truck wrapped around his stone cold dead neck, and a tattoo on his arm which was anything but rap or hip-hop.

“Sasha Dimtrovich Minskov. His hobbies included trafficking of everything from heroin-coated weed, illegal credit cards, and Siberian girls who would never grow up to be women,” Detective Fedoroff noted of the white ‘gangsta’s’ face. He ran his tired fingers through his own mane of long brown hair, breathed a whiff of stagnantly-salty ocean air into his thirty-something nostrils, then breathed out a prayer and curse in his Native tongue which had no English translation.

“One of yours again, Comrade?” balding, beer-bellied and always overbearingly Sergeant Jimmy Pappas said to Boris, taking a closer look at the writing on the victim’s tattoo. “Ruskie inscription. Great street tat.”

“Red Army, Sergeant Pappas.” Boris shot back assertively, but with civility, a discipline all Russians learned by necessity when their dignity was being challenged by those who would remain in authority. “A unit that kept our border with China safe, and kept many Christians from killing Moslems in Croatia.”

“After killing themselves a whole bunch of Chechnians, Boris?” the always-gum-chewing Greek smiled back at his partner of two years now. He slapped on a pair of rubber gloves and rummaged through the victims’ overstuffed pockets. “Them Chechnians are ragheads, but they’re fighting for their freedom.”

“And working for terrorists who killed women, children and sick elderly people in.” Boris held back from the usual political discussions that Jimmy the Geeky Greek kept pulling him into, be it about a dead body, a witness to a B and E, or the sexual orientation of any meek-mannered schlep on the other side of the donut selling counter. “That is a lot of money in your friend Sasha’s pockets,” Fedoroff noted as Pappas counted it out, taking official note of one one in four of the bills tallied for the evidence bag, putting the rest into a donut wrapper.

“You know what I can’t figure out about you, Detective Fedoroff?” Pappas smacked back though a gum-covered tongue and lips.

“That I sing “Under the Boardwalk” in Russian lyrics that sound better than the ones in English, Sergeant Pappas?” Boris asked of his superior as another car pulled up, their sirens off.

Two uniforms emerged. By the way they greeted Jimmy Pappas, his best friends when it came to matters of life and death, closest friend.

“What I can’t figure about you, Boris, is that why you call your buds by our last names, and this fag Ruskie punk ‘Sasha’, or any criminal scum, by their first name,” Sergeant Pappas blasted directly into his Russian ‘Comrades’ face, the Post 9/11 American flag on his lapel shining in the dull moonlight.

“It helps me to understand them better if I call criminals by first names,” Boris confessed, slipping back into his ‘just off the boat’ English. “Is my job to understand the criminal mind, yes?”

“Da, Comradeski,” Pappas laughed back as he divided the money from the dead Russian ‘gansta’s’ pockets. Spoils of the 12 hours a day, three week long hunt that led him to Sasha Dimitrovski Minskov, the Black Sheep of his otherwise established ‘family’. “You’re a criminologist, not a Cop, Comrade Fedoroff. Which is why you’ll never be a Sergeant, Boris.”

“Cruelty is a pathology of the soul, a weakness of the mind, a deficit in the Spirit,” Boris shot back, trying his best to believe it himself.

“If you so, Doctor Zvivago,” the Greek geek continued as he prepared four piles of greenbacks, the kind of money that is not reported as stolen, two for his buds, one for himself and one which he offered to his closest friend.

Boris shook his head in an affirmative 'no'.

"Combat pay, Boris. Please." Jimmy Pappas insisted. "This Sasha punk's old man pulls in every week ten times what you and me earn, with our sweat and blood, in a year."

Still Boris refused. He knew that Jimmy knew that he wouldn't rat on his NYPD buds for doing what 90 percent of Cops in New York did by habit, the same proportion in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Union by economic necessity. Then, Jimmy said the words that always made Boris place practicality over more lofty Mistresses who could not be afforded in the dog-eat-dog capitalistic world that had been victorious in the Cold War.

"You won't take this 'dirty money' for yourself, then take it for your kid, Detective Fedoroff. The one who is in that special hospital Upstate that the Doctors say he still needs." Jimmy pleaded. "My Godson deserves the best medical care he can get, and no insurance company is gonna take care of him the way he deserves to be..."

Boris grabbed hold of his share of the cash just before the next two Blue and Whites turned the corner, a Coroner's truck behind them, a fleet of News reporters bringing up the rear. It was loot that no one would miss, and would certainly be put to better use through his hands than anyone else's, but it still felt wrong. Jimmy found a way to say the words that echoed comfort. "Fathers have to take care of their sons."

"Yes, fathers taking care of their sons," Boris repeated, eyes turned away, guilt swelling in his Soul for offenses Jimmy never knew about and could never understand. He knew that Jimmy would be able to see just how much that statement ran true to his own failings, successes and 'dumb luck' which he was forced to 'enjoy' every day of his now-privileged life as the, so far, most valued ex-Russian Cop in the All-American NYPD.

CHAPTER 3

Carlos entered the small coffin-like chamber in his cleanest Sunday clothes, a freshly-washed white shirt, grey trousers, a sportcoat with only five holes in it and nothing on his feet except flesh, his spit-shinned shoes having been left outside. It seemed appropriate for what he had to say to What, or Who was on the other side of the blackened wall. He knelt, crossed himself and said the words he had been rehearsing for his death since only a few years after he was born. "Forgive me Father, for I have sinned," he said in Latin.

"Excuse me, my son?" the voice from the other side of the wall.

"I said, forgive me Father, for I have sinned," Carlos replied, in English, disappointed and enraged. "I thought that you understood Latin, Father Rabinowitz. I heard you say Mass in Latin."

Carlos could hear the Jew-turned-Christian-then-Catholic Priest sigh in Yiddish. “Speaking to parishioners in Latin about the world is much more difficult than saying Mass to them in that tongue,” the sixty-going-ninety Priest said through a gravelly voice that smelled of pastrami, pickels...and something else new to Carlos’ nostrils.

“Are you trying on a new perfume for the ladies, Father. Or maybe the alter boys?” Carlos smirked.

“It is liniment, for my back. Caster oil, if you must know! And as for me indulging in sex with women, or acts which I will not dignify with any response, I---”

“---You what, Father Rabinowitz? Daddy Isaac. Izzy, Izzy-for real, or Izzy---?” Carlos pressed, a smirk on his face.

“---You came here to confess your sins, Carlos! What are they.”

“God knows the particulars...Why should I tell you?” the aging Cuban who kept himself alive with cigars, rum and conspiracy theories pressed.

“You think this booth is bugged?” Father Rabinowitz asked in an aloof manner that Carlos knew all too well. “This is very interesting.”

“You aren’t my headshrinker, Father Rabinowitz!” Carlos sneared back, clenching his fist, remembering those days that he dared never tell anyone about, particularly doctors or those who could put him under the constant care of such again. “You are a Preist, Isaac! You are supposed to absolve me of my sins!”

“I need to know what those sins are first, Carlos,” Rabinowitz replied, gently. “Everything here is between me, you and God. Nobody else.”

He seemed to mean it this time. Besides, Carlos’ best friends were those he imagined to exist, God being only one of them, on a good day. Maybe by clearing the air, he could find the way back home again. “I’m hearing voices again, Isaac,” he related with hands breaking out in sweat. His feet trembled, the knees knocking against each other reminding him of the arthritis that was complicating his other various ‘conditions’.

“Have you been taking your medication?” the Priest inquired.

“Yes. I think so...As I remember...I think I am. Yes, I am!”

“And what are the voices saying?”

“I don’t know. And something tells me I shouldn’t know. They sound demonic...”

“Sound wisdom, my Son. It is not good to listen to demons.”

“And it isn’t good to do things that are wrong either, right? Even if those wrong things haven’t been done yet, and seem to be right?”

“And those wrong things are...?”

Struggling to put it into words, Carlos hit himself on his wrists. Three times, as the self-created and usually effective ritual called for.

“And those wrong things that may be right are, Carlos?” the Priest pressed.

“I’m taking away a child’s innocence!” the Latino veteran of many wars, most of them fought within his own head, let out.

After a tense pause that felt like forever, the Priest finally answered. "What kind of innocence are we talking about, my son?"

"I'm not going to tell you as a Priest, Father. But I will tell you as a friend. Man to man."

"What's her name, Carlos?" the very Catholic Priest with the Jewish nose shot back with a .22 calibre remark that felt like a tank shell hitting the Latino's libido and conscience with a direct hit.

"Seana." Carlos felt the lips on his shaking chin move upward in what felt like a real smile, one that could be trusted. "The kind of doctor who I can tell things to, I think. One of a kind kind of girl."

"A psychiatrist with a heart?...Now that would be a miracle." Rabinowitz answered with humanity that was well tested with adversity, and heartache. "Is she pretty?"

"Bouncy blonde hair, big blue eyes, dances well, D-cup breasts that she thinks are size B or A---"

"---And between the ears?"

"She's from Newfoundland, ya know, boy," Carlos related with his best Newfy accent.. "The part of Canada the Canadians make jokes about. A place where stealing a bicycle makes the front page of the newspaper. She's always smiling, sort of. Polite. Pleasant. Someone who loves life, and knows nothing about how it really works. She cuts open people for a living, and it seems to be killing her. She's so good and innocent."

"God protects the good and the innocent," Father Rabinowitz offered.

"From people like us," Carlos confessed. "And maybe God MIGHT protect her from the people who kill the people she cuts open for a living. She wants to speak for the dead, defend them, and get justice for them. And with the cases she has now...and who I suspect is giving her more business." The Latino felt a shiver go through his spine, then something more familiar, a shooting pain going up his leg and into his lower back. "What was that you were using for your bad back, Father?"

"Caster oil, my Son." Soul Doctor Rabinowitz seemed to smile back. "Three Hail Mary's for the Lord, and three acts of kindness to offer, but not push, on your Doctor Seana."

Carlos stood up, crossed himself three times, took a deep breath and opened the veil of the Communion booth. The world outside was still the same, and the voices of the demons seemed to be less loud than when he entered the Church. At least for now.

CHAPTER 4

"Damn it!" Det. Sargent Jimmy Pappas grunted out when he saw the 'Closed' sign on the Hellenic Diner door, appended by a few Greek phrases that his still-partner Boris Fedoroff surmised had something to do with vile excrement. "The Roselli family can't keep my favorite Greek Restaurant out of the red!" He looked around the neighborhood, noting the lack of English spoken around him. "And speaking of RED, Comrade Boris, wasn't it us who won the Cold War?"

"Perhaps," Boris replied, noting the newly established places of business in the neighborhood displaying Russian on the windows in bigger letters than English. The women dressed better than anyone on Park Avenue. The men clad in obligatory leather coats and polished shoes that were distinctly European. "You won the war, but I'm afraid that our people won the peace," he smiled.

Jimmy could hear people talking around him, and about him, in the Slavic tongue which his staunchly Greek and ardently anti-Communist father said was 'the language of the devil'. But then he noted a 'hello' from two Ruskie

women. They smiled, at him in the kind of language that transcends politics. Hot babes who were well-stacked, hot-assed and classy. “Who loves ya baby!” he said back to them in boastful ‘Kojakese’.

The two Russian girls looked at each other, then delivered some words back to the beer-bellied Greek that made him feel important, manly and hotter than the Russian ‘studs’ who somehow got into the pants of all the hottest Italian and Greek gals in his neighborhood. “Da! Later girls!” Jimmy waved back with a wink and a thumbs up.

The two ladies giggled in a way that seemed mature, playful and classy, pointed to the second story of a store that sold Religious Icons, at cut rates and went on their way.

“What did they say, Boris?” Jimmy asked. “What part of me did turned them on?”

“The fact that you have that wedding ring on your finger?” Boris replied. “And, I surmise, that if your wife found out about it, she would take the house, your money, your kids, your---”

“---Okay, okay...I get it,” Jimmy shot back. “You’re jealous.”

“I suppose, but I am also looking out after your best interests,” Boris replied. His above average hearing was able to discern the woman talking in the distance, their colorful and untranslatable Slavic insults having diametrically different meaning than their smiles.

“I suppose you are jealous, Boris,” Jimmy replied. He patted his Russian Comrade on the shoulder with his right hand, his left discreetly pushing the erected penis under his pants under the elastic in his underwear so it wouldn’t be overtly obvious as he went about his duty and right to find a donut shop that advertised its wares in English.

Boris exchanged glances with the women. “Yes, Boris,” they said with their eyes. “We did say that your friend the Greek Geek is a sexy as a pig who is masturbating himself. And we’ll take whatever money, or dignity, he has as soon as we take him pants off in our ‘pastry’ shop above the Religious Icon store. And, yes, practicality is the only morality or authority we respect. The only kind you can really trust. If you can steal it, God says you have the permission to keep it. And, oh yes, God can be bribed too, just as easily as a St. Petersburg Real Estate baron can buy his illiterate son or brain-dead daughter, a Ph.D. from any university in Russia.”

The two ‘girls’ were called up to their ‘pastry shop’ by what looked like a Ukrainian clerk waving two booklets which seemed to be passports. They sauntered up the stairs, were given entry, then had the door closed behind them. The kindly clerk smirked, looked at the passports, bobbed his head back and forth with indecision, and finally decided to put one into his breasts, the other inside his crotch over what was clearly an enlarging penis.

Boris looked at himself in the glass of an upscale flower shop. The kind that his father ‘managed’ after being officially retired from his government job following the fall of the Soviet Union. The OFFICIAL fall of it, anyway. By all physical accounts, Boris was a prime example of the Progressive New Russia. Unlike half the Americans he worked with, Boris had a full head of hair, which was straight and stylable. Chiseled chin, strong jaw, solid and tastefully proportioned muscles underneath the neck. Good set of eyes and ears above it. A belly which had never known hunger, a back that had never been broken with a whip, a mind that was never threatened by Soul-numbing labor. All of the advantages, passed down by routes that he could never talk about, and which he found about about before it was too late.

Boris thought about his real abilities, and accomplishments. Like the ‘girls’ in the shop above the Pastry Shop, and most of the other shops in the neighborhood, his own paperwork and criminal record check from his youth had holes in it which an American Immigration Attorney could run a truck through. But there were even graver offenses, paradoxically not punishable by any Court.

Did he get into the best schools in the Old Country and get the best grades once there because he was handsome, smart, or someone bribed the teachers behind his back? It was something his mother would have done to help our her son. Something his father had the connections and money to fund, and keep private, even from his own, and only, heir. But an heir to what? A New Capitalism that enslaved with money the way the KGB had enslaved with guns? And as for the innocence of youth, and the conviction that ‘once you get into or are placed into the system

you will change it' kept Boris awake for more nights than he remembered. Nights spent away from wife and son, the former leaving him and winding up at the bottom of a ditch in an 'accident' which was never adequately explained. The latter lying in a hospital in desperate need of health care in a country where even the most well-insured public servant went broke providing his loved ones with the kind of health care which was, assuming you found the right doctor, available for everyone in the Soviet Union without charge.

Jimmy appeared on the scene, donut in mouth, cell phone in his hand. "Gotta roll, kid", he said through a mouth of chocolate glazed powder. Boris grabbed the police radio.

"Vito Roselli, by the looks of it," the dispatcher announced. "Dead in his bowl of minestrone. Urine on his trousers. Bloody shit on his ass. It's Good Friday again for the Rosellis. Picture of a blonde Caucasian hooker in his left pocket. Bloody crucifix around his neck."

"Three cheers for the chef!" Jimmy proclaimed as he pumped on the accelerator and proceeded to the address. "And for the Russian broad who, maybe, left her picture in that bastards' pants."

"Hmmm....Russian," Boris contemplated. He looked around him and remembered what his father told him in those days when he was in 'training' as a young boy. "Smell what the people are doing, don't listen what they are saying. And always know that when the sheep start to become more plentiful in the cows' pasture, there is a wolf afoot somewhere." As for Boris' adaptation of such, the transition of this very neighborhood which used to be 'Little Napoli' into becoming 'New Odessa' was given a big boost forward with each Roselli 'death' in the family, the count of 'Good Friday' deaths now sitting at four according to the news, six according to police reports that were sometimes filed, and sometimes lost.

They passed a Fortune Teller Pizza joint run, at least in name, by an eighty-year old Sicilian gypsy 'Gabiella'. "Nana Gabriella" who made the best garlic calzones in the Metro area, two dollars a slice for Italians, three for Russians and a quarter for Cops in the 'Golden Times' before, according to her, God decided to curse the Rosellis. The zoning laws were being now redefined by new City Council members whose names ended with Slavic 'off' or 'ov's, instead of Italian 'A's' or 'Is', Her garlic calzones never tasted the same after the fourth Roselli 'Good Friday' death. Gabriella seemed lonely in the shop, shuffling her way to the tables to deliver slices to her now Slavic customers, and now working for the hired help behind the counter, all blonde haired, blue eyed kids whose facial characteristics reminded Boris of one family. One of their members had decided upon a career bigger than City Council and operator of the local black markets, his Americanized face plastered on every billboard within sight.

"Mike Minskov," Boris said with a familiar hatred that festered in him every waking hour of every day since he joined the Force.

"He's running for office. Congress or state Senate or some other shit." the Greek nodded in a strangely congratulatory gesture to the red, white and blue political banner bearing the name and likeness of Mikael, now 'Mike' Minskov, 'man of the people'. A Donald Trump clone if any could be created, a mixture of power, kindness and love of competition in the ex-Socialist's face. "A smart kid, this Mike Minskov."

"With a connected father," Boris fumed. "Ivan the---"

"---Ivan the guy who's getting rid of the Roselli Mob, the WAP wannabe gangs, the Chink gangs, the Guatmalins, the other Spik low lifes, and the garbage in his own family who---"

"---Make him do what he does outside of the law instead of being inside it." Boris surmised. "Like Sasha Minskov, the punk renegade who we found dead under the boardwalk last week. Who was trying to set up shop away from his father's."

"Or working for his father?" Jimmy offered. "And offed by a Roselli."

"Or someone trying to impress the Roselli's," Boris offered.

“Who’ll wind up dead if the hit wasn’t approved by the Roselli family,” Jimmy replied. “It’s easier to get Congress to give the CIA a permit to off a douch-bag president of a shithead country somewhere than it is for the Roselli or any Italian mobster family I know about to sanction a hit on anyone, particularly a Russian mobster who can wack them back. Our Mafia here has rules.”

“And ours from Russia doesn’t,” Boris confessed. “A good friend of mine got shot because a well connected Russian mobster wanted said friend’s parking space at the airport.”

“Yeah....must have been rough over there, Boris,” Jimmy said.

“It happened here,” Boris shot back, not giving the name, or details, or explaining why tears were finding their way down his red, angry face. “But as for the Roselli’s...maybe the ‘how’ will lead us to the ‘who’. And this time, I’m going to get ALL the who’s who did it!”

“Yeah, kid. We will,” Jimmy answered. Another call came on the radio. Another homeless junkie found dead on the doorstep of a Five Star grocery store. Another case that would never be solved. Another symptom of a disease that required a lot more than reshuffling of mobsters and crooks in the City Council or State Assembly.

CHAPTER 5

Though she was scheduled for a day off, Seana Ryan, MD, was grateful that the other ME on shift was still out with the twenty-four hour ‘flu’, conveniently acquired on Seana’s days off. It meant less worry about how to pay the \$2,000 a month rent for the one room box she called a ‘studio’ in her letters back home. And a chance to ignore that every day she worked at the lab was one less day she had to face the real fact that the loneliest city in the world after hours was the Big Apple. Half of the total population of Canada all crammed together into a ten by ten mile ‘yard’ surrounded by water on the outside and uncountable numbers of bylaws on the inside. It was a Paradise if you had an extroverted personality, gobs of money, or a reputation that made you king or queen of your ‘game’. As for the latter, entry into the ‘big time’ of forensic pathology would require working as many extra shifts, and colorful cases, as Seana could get, particularly as she had to please two parties who, one way or another, signed her paychecks. From the first day at work, it seemed odd that a civilian job at the NYU Medical Center morgue involved so much military language in the terms of every day discourse, delivered from mouths of men with crew cuts who seemed happiest with themselves when they sat or stood up at ‘attention’. When you left your desk for lunch you were ‘on leave’, according to the bosses. And when you were being informed about a patient who died of cancer upstairs you were being ‘briefed’ on the case. And from Seana’s subordinates, all those ‘Ma’ams’, despite the fact that the leftist Peacenick refused to call anyone ‘Sir’.

“I wonder what the Men in Red, White and Black, will want me to tell them about you,” Seana said to Vito Roselli’s dead, but still expressive, brown eyes as he lay biologically exposed and very naked on her slab. Her fingers rummaged through the organs inside his regulation-sized Guido beer belly. “Do you think it would matter if I told my bosses that you died confused and terrified?” she smiled, sadly. “But, no...they want ‘objective’ facts they can use. My civilian and...other...bosses. In the kind of language I never quite got right when I was in Doctor

School. You see, Vito... there's a vocabulary to medical reports. Cold, dry, accurate, with its own descriptors that I never quite got right, and that have nothing to do with the land of the living. Like this crepitous liver of yours which to my fingers feels crunchy. And the kidney which is 'multinodular' rather than 'hard like marbles'. Your spleen which is 'enlarged and deformable' instead of 'big and soft'. And your intestines which are as you say, I know, and my bosses are---fucked." She ran her fingers up and down the 20 foot gustatory tube which was now more blood and holes than intestine. Another hallmark finding in every Roselli she had opened up since the barrage began, something that her other medical colleagues seemed to forget, or dismiss as 'post mortem artifact'.

The silence in the room felt deafening to Seana's ears, with faint voices that she couldn't quite hear, but could feel. Logic told her that it was gossip from the coffee rooms and bathrooms upstairs filtering down the pipes to the basement. Inner intuition, and her own history of 'abberant behavior' allowed her to consider that it was coming from those who left their bodies, but not quite the world yet. Maybe these ghosts of the dead were asking for directions regarding subway trains to take to get out of town, or where to find a suitable mate for out of body sexual thrills in the Singles Purgatory clubs whose locations they had not yet located. Or maybe, as Carlos kept saying, they wanted justice for their real killers, always in the highest positions, and always above the law.

Something in Vito's eyes, or his thirty year old still lingering Soul sent Seana over to the other side. There was something very demonic about his death, despite the very Catholic crucifix around his neck. He died confused, his mind torn away from his Soul. As the sun moved across the narrow slit euphamistically called a 'window', it shone on his face. It looked familiar. Like the one that Seana saw every day for the year when she was 'vacationing' in Holland. His face, but her eyes, and their shared agony. The conversation played out in her head again as time ran backwards, yet again.

"So, you are sure you don't want to have this baby?" the white-haired Nurse asked Seana in Dutch, then English.

"Yes," Seana remembered answering, quivering with fear, the sound of sterile 'buzz' in her not-yet-eighteen-year-old ear. "My mother was Dutch, so I'm entitled to---"

"--Yes, we know all that," the matronly woman in White assured her.

"And I was raped, really," Seana continued.

"So you wrote on your paperwork. In handwriting that..."

"I was raped, you bitch!"

"By a bastard you refused to tell the police anything about," the Dutch Nurse who looked more like a Norse Viking shot back in a soft voice which was as understanding as it was accusational. "If you help us find him, we can see that he is put in jail."

"No...no jail, Brunhilde! No jail!"

"Then you and your boyfriend can---"

"He is NOT my boyfriend!" the tears rolled town Seana's face, pushed out of her bloodshot eyes by emotions so intense that she could not identify them.

"And you are sure he is the boy's father?" the Nurse asked, keeping her professional distance.

"Boy?"

"Yes," 'Brunhilde'replied. She showed Seana the chart and the pictures. "An ultrasound picture of the baby. With a very large penile projectile," she continued with the reserved brand of compassion which offered caring without a smile, but without a knife behind a wide 'I love you girl' grin either. "Evidence of his quite notable manhood is circled. The radiologist was teaching students when he did the ultrasound and I am told he has quite the sense of humor."

The Nurse showed the ultrasound picture to Seana, but she turned her head. "I don't want to see it."

"And apparently you don't want it, the way you were beating yourself on the belly when we found you, drunk."

"I was not drunk!"

"Of course, Miss 'van Patton'," 'Brunhilde' read from the chart, about to find out the truth about Seana's 'white' lies.

"I was never drunk!...Except for...except for..."

"The night this happened?" the Nurse Brunhilde said, pointing to the ultrasound. She seemed to care about Seana more than Seana cared about herself. And speak with a wisdom that came from the heart and the soul. She sat down next to Seana and stroked her hair. "You are a young. And if you wish to, could make a wonderful mother."

"Not to what is inside me. My family would not understand!" Seana insisted.

"They would understand, my dear."

"Maybe yours would, but not mine!" the claim from the rebellious teen who grew up in Newfoundland, a God loving land where everything green and wonderful is displayed for all to see. And everything else is swept under the rug at home, or tossed into the abortionist's waste bucket someplace else... Even before 'the incident', she could feel voices but not quite hear them. 'Come home, Seana', they all whispered in angelic tones that felt demonic before the 'incident' with the man whose name she never divulged to the Police. With each year after the incident, and the manner in which she dealt with it, the voices got louder, and louder, until---

Seana Ryan, MD, woke up from the nightmare which visited her almost daily now to see a man with a generic brown suit in front of him, black shoes, colorfully 'handsome' in every one of his features. A James Bond kind of 'dream' man to any girl who grew up in Newfoundland. "You saw mouse?" he smiled with what seemed like genuine kindness, replying to Seana's scream.

Seana felt sweat on every part of her body, her clothes sticking to the skin underneath. The man walked in, looked at the chart, then the face of the corpse under her scalpel blade, which, thankfully, didn't find its way into her own flesh this time.

"Vito Rosselli, dead on another 'Good Friday'" the man in brown said, with an accent that she confirmed as being Slavic. "As some of 'my people' are calling such Fridays now."

"Your people... Sir?" Seana asked of the man who seemed to hold so much power in his presence. He paced around the corpse with hands held behind his back, an arch in his back, his chin held up with the kind of confidence that he knew he was always right, or at the very least, justified. A military background, clearly he was 'officer' material, at a very high rank. But from which Army? And which side of the law?

He sniffed the abdomen, his nostrils sensing something familiar. "You will collect samples of ALL major organs and send them to the lab."

"Yes, of course."

"And you will confirm that they are analyzed by someone whose abilities and reliability of reporting can be trusted."

"After I ask who the hell you are!...Sir." Seana inquired, trying to hold her fear underneath the tight throat.

The Slavic 'gentleman' flashed an NYPD badge her way then helped himself to a read of the files in her draw. "You sent these reports on the other Roselli deaths upstairs?"

“As sure as you got that badge from the best forger in Brighton Beach, Comrade,” Seana said, taking hold of another scalpel, one with a blade that could cut living human flesh this time. “Carlos!!!” she screamed out.

The Latino janitor ambled into the room, Cuban cigars in his pocket, a newspaper under his arm, and a freshly opened Mountain Dew from the vending machine in his hand. “Doctor Seana Ryan. Meet Detective Fedoroff. The most honest thief in the New York Police Department.” The grimy custodial engineer sat himself down on his ‘godfather’ chair, put his feet up on the table, and began reading, starting with the obituaries this time. “Have a light, Boris?” he said as he coughed up phlegm with a touch of blood in it.

“Sure, Carlos.” Detective Fedoroff tossed the old man a lighter. Gold, with an inscription on it in Russian that seemed impressive.

The detective’s search around Seana’s castle, at least when she was on shift, led him to another file cabinet, which he couldn’t open.

“It must be stuck, Detective Fedoroff, Sir,” Seana sneered.

“And I suppose that you have the key that would make it ‘unstuck’, Doctor Ryan, Miss?”

Something about Boris made him seem like someone who should be trusted. Maybe it was the sadness in his face. The cynicism behind his authoritative eyes. The compassion he seemed to show for the dead, his examination of Roselli and the other corpses still in the morgue starting with the face, then ending with a stare into their now lifeless eyes. Or maybe it was the bulge under his jacket which she confirmed as being a gun as he opened its buttons.

Seana retrieved the key from under the desk and opened the file cabinet. “We’ve had some kids come around. They steal stuff, ya know.”

“Yes, I know,” Boris replied as he glanced at Seana’s original reports on the Roselli deaths. “Your suggestions as to the causes of death are all mistaken, according to the people upstairs, who seem to know the causes of death.”

“The Roselli family keeps this hospital funded. They pay my salary, her salary, and...hey...maybe even yours salary, Detective Fedoroff,” Carlos shot back from his cushion-covered throne while shrugging his shoulders at the headlines revealing yet another defeat of the NY Giants in the fourth quarter by the fifth place team in their division. “If their family dies of honorable diseases, it is good for business.”

“When people upstairs always ‘know’ things that people downstairs cannot figure out, the people downstairs must get their asses out of the basement,” the Slavic Detective pronounced. “It loses a lot in translation, but it is, still very, very true. As it is that a wise man, or woman, must always doubt a superior who gives more orders than explanations.”

“Yes, Sir!” Seana saluted, mockingly.

Detective Fedoroff stared at her sternly. He seemed hurt as well under the accusation, the worse kind of thing a boss could throw at an employee. In his face was that ‘stare’ that Seana remembered from every boss who ever fired her from every job, from the gig as a temporary coroner in Providence, Rhode Island to the after school positions at the only grocery store back in Youngman’s Cove, Newfoundland. She contemplated the situation, and dilemma. Was she about to be canned again, this time for defending the honor of another dead Roselli, whose brand of ‘honor’ ultimately served no one but themselves? It seemed so, until Carlos pushed himself up off Seana’s favorite chair and carried his arthritic legs over to the Slavic Detective, handing him back his lighter.

Again, the Russian ‘inspector’s’ nose smelled something. “What is that odor?” he asked, an answer to a long-unsolved dilemma brewing behind his guilt-ridden face. “What is that...”

Fedoroff walked around the room and confirmed it. “Yes,” he said once. “Da” he repeated again and again as he took a whiff of Vito’s Roselli’s liver, kidney and intestine. “Da” he confirmed when he sniffed the bags lingering in

Seana's other 'stuck' draw which contained samples from Frank Roselli, Giovanni Rosselli and another Rosselli whose name the Irish-Dutch Newfoundlander kept misspelling on the report each time she resubmitted it. "Carlos. That linament you are using on your back."

"Castor oil, from the Good Earth Health food store...for arthritis." Carlos noted. "It reminds you of something?"

"God delivers oranges to you to remind you that you should be looking for apples instead of elephants," professed. "Your visit to Good Earth Health food store...think it will save Earth from new disaster...and this city from..."

"From what...?" Seana asked. Carlos seemed confused. The Detective shut the door, locking it from the inside, then checking the room for electronic devises.

"I have one request, which I will make an order if you force me to do so," he announced.

"Da, Comrade!" Seana sneered.

"The first...to call me Boris, as we will be working very closely together." The detective washed his hands, rubbing off layers of skin.

"And the second, Detective Fedoroff, Sit ?" Seana bolted back, armed folded and locked.

"Take off your clothes. Both of you," he commanded, carefully retrieving the examining gloves used on Vito Roselli from the disposal bin into a plastic bag. "You both smell of death."

Carlos smelled under his arms, noting the castor oil which seemed to cure constipation between Boris' ears more than it ever untied the knots in his own back.. Seana felt it odd that the suspicions she had about her internal condition of 'dull out', an occupational hazard for every physician-scientist, had finally manifested itself.

"And, on a computer which is not yours, look up a name. Georgi Markov," Boris insisted, giving no further explanation. He took out two cards, giving one to Carlos, the other to Seana.

Carlos' face turned whiter than any of the corpses, without reading a single word of his specific instructions.

"What's going on?" Seana slurred from a mouth forced open by confusion, with fear to soon follow.

"The Cold War just heated up again, and is on our doorsteps," the Castro-hating conspiracy janitor stated with a clarity that scared the crap out of Seana. And which affirmed to Boris that their accidental meeting would as willed by God Himself.

"Caster oil is a byproduct of a ricin, a Southern grown plant, Ricinus Commones," Seana read on the library computer terminal she signed in as 'Barbara Bushed'. Even through the darkened sunglasses that Boris insisted that she wore, the ornamental plant on the screen seemed to glow with the kind of green which reminded her of home. As for Georgi Markov, the details were far less aesthetically pleasing.

It was the kind of reading that Carlos had done religiously, out of necessity, according to him. Out of displaced and romantic passion, according to the free-thinking shrinks in the hospital who were unofficially looking after his welfare so that he would not have to be admitted to the wards where less-tolerant psychiatrists used all manner of medications and restrains to inflict 'normal health' on human spirits who didn't, or couldn't, obey the rules of mainstream society. In 1978, Mister Markov was living in London, a defector from then Communist Bulgaria. He was on his way to another day as a journalist working for the BBC and Radio Free Europe when he was nudged on the thigh by an umbrella by a fellow passenger while waiting for a bus. A few hours later, he noticed a large, red bruise under his jeans at home. By the next day, the bruise had grown into a red, necrotic mass that was ate up his leg. After admission to hospital, the flesh eating 'mass' had worked its way into his abdominal organs, devouring every organ on its way. He died of 'unknown causes' in the 1978 reports. Leaks from KGB Glastnost defectors

traced the cause of death to ricin which was on the tip of the umbrella which 'nudged' him when he was on the London bus line. According to post Soviet contemporary reports, the assassin behind Georgi Markov was still at large. According to the man behind Seana, the source of the ricin was unequivocal.

"It was made in 'The Laboratory'." Boris confessed. "A basement in the KGB laboratory where my father took me once. When he thought I wanted to be a chemist. When I thought I wanted to be chemist, too."

Seana glanced back at the Detective who now seemed more like a caught criminal than the most decorated Russian Cop in the 'All-American' NYPD. On his 'nearly homeless dude's' undercover jacket lapel was a Remember 9-11 red white and blue pin, but blackness was affixed to the detective's heart.

"And when ricin is given by mouth..." Boris continued, taking over the keyboard. Seana instantly recognized the symptoms.

"Bloody diarrhea, vomiting, followed by severe dehydration, low blood pressure, hallucinations, confusion. Confusion worsened and/or caused by liver breakdown. Spleen enlargement and necrosis. Kidneys turn into...mush, along with the sanity of the victim. A five day journey through hell, which ends on 'Good' Friday."

"And starts on Sunday," Boris suggested.

"I thought that terrorists took Sunday off," Seana mused. "Union rules, ya know. Like serial killers who chop up the bodies of their victims and dispose of the parts in accordance with bylaws. Arms into the blue bin. Legs into the red bin. Eyes, heads and ears into the yellow---"

"---This isn't funny, Doctor Ryan!" Boris insisted.

"I never said it was, Detective Fedoroff, but pretending it is keeps me sane. And functionally content enough to do my job," Seana replied with quivering lips and angry eyes.

"Two more minutes, Miss Bushed" the never-to-be-married thirty-something librarian announced dispassionately and authoritatively as she made her rounds at the e mail terminals. It was her job to see that everyone on line for the outlets to the world got a fair shot at it, even though most of the kids at the library waiting to get on line could barely read.

"So...?" Seana asked Boris, whose undercover grunge clothes didn't fit his intelligent and philosophical eyes. "Our next step?"

"Mother Nature, and Father Science." Boris said with a gravelly voice twice his age.

"Who never got along, even on their honeymoon," Seana found herself repeating, and realizing. "According to my old chemistry professor."

"We are our own professors now," the thirty something Detective said with the voice of a very wise, committed and old man.

CHAPTER 6

“If you don’t tell me where you’re going, I’ll report you AWOL, Doctor Ryan.” Carlos warned Seana as she gathered up the remains of Vito Roselli, a chunk of liver, a slice of spleen and an ice cream container of kidney before the rest of the body was signed over to the morticians at the Funeral Home.

“I’m on vacation. Death in the family. Actually not my family, but The Family...a joke, Carlos.” she spat out of a mouth that seemed activated with a sense of urgency. “The official ‘most likely’ cause of death in Vito here according to my bosses upstairs, and yours, was massive staph and E coli infection from something he ate. It will keep the bacteriologists upstairs busy trying to figure out what nurse fucked up on his diet tray. Keep the lawyers employed trying to place the blame on someone in what they and we know is a ‘shit happens to everyone’ world. Besides, the motherfuckers upstairs were about to can me anyway.”

Carlos never heard the F word, S word and particularly MF word from Seana’s mouth. Something or someone had gotten to her. Her knarled hair was uncombed, her imitation suede and discount corduroy outfit mismatched, and her skin smelt of many layers of fear-infused sweat, particularly when she rummaged through the refrigerator for the bags she had labelled ‘lunch’. “They’re gone!” she gasped. “Frank Roselli. And all the other samples that I was saving in case---”

“---In case the lab screwed up? Or you did and had to send up another piece of tissue so someone else’s mistake doesn’t go on your record?” Carlos limped his way to the ‘lunch box’ refrigerator and found it efficiently organized in a way Seana never had arranged. “You should hide the tissue samples you don’t send upstairs in a better place. I suppose the health inspector came by to...” The blabbering pathologically-open Janitor turned silent, and secretive.

“---What do you know, ‘Carlos’?” Seana nervously inquired, a scalpel in her shaking hand directed at the janitor who had been her closest friend since her arrival in the Big Crab Apple.

“That someone took my Cuban cigars, that my name really is Carlos, and that you will use that scalpel to slit your own wrists, again, before cutting open any living human being. Not a good trait for someone in your new line of work, Doctor.”

Carlos didn’t mean to lay it on Seana so directly, and painfully. She needed time to absorb everything that was happening to her. And to deal with everything that was happening in her boss’s office upstairs, and in all the offices further up the line. It would have been nice if the ultimate boss was a Heavenly Father who set all of His employees against each other for a common good which the human mind was not yet developed enough to recognise or consciously serve. But as far as Carlos was concerned, God was on a long lunch break, with no indication as to when, or if, He was coming back. Indeed, Carlos felt that he had cheated the ‘Divine Plan’ himself, having seen too much in his nearly eighty-year old life already, yet still desiring and needing to keep his eyes wide open. More painful that way, but necessary, so that Seana could be spared the kind of ‘Enlightenment’ that tortured him daily.

Seana grabbed her coat, her shaking hands placing the wrong buttons in the inappropriate holes. She wrapped her scarf around one side of her neck, apparently thinking it was put on properly by the way she gritted her teeth and arched her back, ignoring the usual 'mirror check' which was her pattern before leaving the lab.

"Where are you going?" Carlos asked.

"Why do you want to know? Are you my father?" Seana blasted out, gathering papers from draws even Carlos didn't know about. She snatched a tongue depressor and scraped what she could from the table where Vito had been exposed to her world into plastic baggies, scribbling notes on them which were uncharacteristically illegible. She looked at her watch, noting the lateness of the time and urgency of the moment. "I'll be home...late, very late, 'Pop'," she spat out.

"Yes, I just might be the father you never had, or thought you had, or maybe...wanted?" Carlos offered the woman who never spoke about what it like to be a girl.

Seana's cell phone rang. "Da" she blasted into the receiver. "Duuu" she continued, condescendingly. "I'll be there as soon as I can."

With that she hung up and and marched out of the lab. "Follow me and I'll have you fired...or committed," she yelled out to Carlos as she stormed down the hallway, Alive between the ears, firm in her footing, in rythm with an inner drummer that he prayed was not playing her into the grave.

The garage was filled with equipment, most of it mismatched, but functioning up to capacity, according to the impish operator who hunchbacked his way from one machine to another. He said something in what sounded German as he stroked what was left of his now-all-white hair across his shrivelled up ears, smelling the samples from Vito Roselli with a nose that extended nearly down to his lower chin.

"He smells something suspicious in it," Boris translated, as Seana's ear noted something Wagnerian coming out the the eight track tape deck.

The half-mad but very sane over-the-hill scientist looked at Seana and smiled through a mouth of mal-aligned black teeth. "Du bist scientist...?" he asked.

"Scientist. Yes. Me." Seana replied with her best 'all is well and wonderful' smile. She looked around her, recognizing the equipment, and remembering the soul-numbing years as a graduate student during which she became proficient in using it. "Yes. Ich bin Scientist," she concluded with pride, and regret

"Nien", the Old Imp laughed, discoursing about something with Boris in the tongue that Seana had taken two semesters of courses to understand, and which now she understood not a single word.

"What is going on?" she asked. "Was ist los?" she remembered from the old Submarine movies she had watched with her father in the days before the troubles started back home.

"He says that you are too wise in the heart to be a scientist," Boris translated. "But that your intelligence does make you a passable, and pretty, technician."

"A pretty technician!" Seana blasted out, her scientific, medical and feminine ego assaulted. "I'll show you 'technician'." With that, she proceeded to open her bag of medical samples and 'burrowed' lab supplies, ordering Boris and the 'Old Professor' to do be HER assistants. "Okay, 'gentlemen', as you know, ricin contains an A chain and a B chain, each 32 thousand molecular weight. Which should be easily determined by this thin liquid chromatography machine of yours. Trypsin digestion should produce an amino acid analysis with breaks aat T5,7, 11 and 13. I think I can rig this 'still' up to doing an adenosine release assay with the radioactive adenine that found its way into this 'hot' little bag of mine that I put around my 'hot' little belt around him 'hot' maybe-not-so-little ass.

You no doubt aren't so advanced to have an antibody reaction test for this but, if we move our friendly little fingers, 'gentleman', fast enough, we can affirm that there is ricin in Mister Roselli's schmucked kidney, smashed spleen and 'spongiform' liver. I'd love to use 'spongiform' in real life, but in mixed company, a 'gentleman' might mistake it for talk about breast implants."

Seana went on and on in PMS-scientificeze, her male assistants obeying her every command. The Old Professor encouraged her with 'Yes, Ma'am's' Boris taunted and tantilized her suggestive, 'of course, Mastress's.'

Two Wagnerian operas later, it was confirmed. All the papers lay strewn out on the wooden table normally used to make cookoo clocks for the Old Professor's grandchildren. "Ricin, at levels of 1 milligram injected dose, by calculation," she noted proudly.

"Extractable from one of these," the Old Professor said, in English, taking a castor bean from one of the ornamental plants in his locked greenhouse.

"You old....!" Seana sneared. "Du sprechen Sie English!???"

"And with information anyone can get from the internet, one percent of what is in this bean can cause this..." the German expatriate from mainstream science said of the crumbled mesh that had been a Vito and Frank Roselli's livers, with as much humanity as Seana remembered from any Einstein poster, book or newsreel.

Seana felt all the 'why' questions going through her head, and heart. Why did Boris insist on doing the analysis of the tissue here? Why didn't he go to the authorities? Why did he know so much about chemical procedures himself? Then the 'who's'. Who was the NYPD Cop really protecting and who was he genuinely serving? And more immediate to the case, who would be next in a what was shaping up to be a Russian attack on the Italian-American mob that could spill outside 'family' boundaries to unsuspecting 'civilians' at any time now, and so easily.

Detective Fedoroff placed his hands together just below his nose in what seemed like part prayer and part Slavic Sherlock Holmes posture. Seana let her eyes roam around the room, noting a picture by Norman Rockwell One of those family portraits of everyone around a table, each member happy and contented with the place assigned to him, or her, around the turkey, potatoes and other staples of angst-free life. The kind of life that she remembered, and perhaps was real, when she grew up in Youngston Cove, Newfoundland. The turkey would have been ham, the potatoes mixed in with squid, but it boiled down to what a typical Sunday would be like for perhaps any family.

"Family dinner at the Roselli's", Seana speculated.

"With something more than spaghetti on the table." Boris surmised.

As Boris got up, so did Seana. As she perceived it, they were thinking with the same mind. Something that she had not experienced in a long, long time. One of those God given gifts, or, as her darker experiences reminded her, one of the devil's most inviting enticements.

CHAPTER 7

It felt more like a performance than an investigation to Detective Fedoroff, but if he remembered anything from the acting courses he snuck into his university training in Moscow it was to ‘feel’ the part as well as to look it. Professor Nordenskov would have been given Boris the top grade in the class for the way he opened the car door for Seana at the door of Napoli Restaurant. Acalades for the job he did putting tatau cover over his face to cover his stubble, wrinkles and hard bitten Slavic identity. Even higher marks for the lilt in his step, the gentle lisp in his voice and the manly way he portrayed himself as Seana’s metrosexual Hispanic date.

“Fabulous food, here Jennifer. Fabulous!” Boris lisped out through his front teeth regarding the Sunday dinner menu rapidly accumulating the emitted saliva from his mouth. His watchful left eye checked out the Roselli’s pouring into the establishment, each taking their places at what looked like their regular tables in the back.

“They all look so....” Seana noted as herself, rather than the flamboyant redhead which the Peg Bundy wig on her head demanded her to be. “I don’t know, they look so---“

“---Expressive?” Boris smiled in Latino, the White Russian part of him green with envy. He let his weary stare rest upon five tables of Roselli’s, the grandparents speaking Italian, the grandkids answering in English, the parents in between trying to deal with business about what kind of food was best for their elders and youngers with opinions firmly felt and assertively displayed. A very family atmosphere, sanctioned by the arrival of a Catholic Priest whose Surname seemed to be Jewish. His nickname was distinctively Italian, his Yiddish lyrical hand and shoulder gestures fitting so naturally into the musicality of American Italian as it was spoken with the mouth, hands and heart.

“Yes, expressive,” the tastefully respectful Canadian Seana replied. “I mean...yeah. All that talking. With the mouth and the hands. And they talk and listen at the same time. I think they’re listening, anyway.”

“If they are or aren’t, we have to listen harder, my darling,” Boris continued. “Can you hear what they are ordering?”

“Something Italian, Juan?” the Newfoundland newby to New York replied, trying on her best PMS sarcasm and liking it.

“What kind of Italian?” Boris sneared under his angry breath.

“I don’t know why you’re asking me,” Doctor Ryan answered in her best Peg Bundy. “Why not ask him, ‘Genius’?” With that, Seana waved her extra long artificial red fingernails bearing the size extra large costume jewelery diamond ring in the direction of a waiter who seemed to be the hottest Italian stallion in the restaurant’s stable. “Armando! Mama wants to ask you a question. Besides your phone number and condom size,” she smiled.

“Excuse me, Miss?” the waiter bearing the exotic name answered in street Brooklynese.

“She wanted to ask you...” dressed-to-the-nines “Juan” related by way of excuse as his eye spotted the trays of food being delivered to the Roselli tables as quickly as they seemed to be ordered. “What is that food over there that looks so good. And smells so delicious?”

The waiter rattled the names of the delicacies which were all variations of the same five ingredients off to Seana, once so she could understand the diction, a second time so she could identify it on the menu, and third time so she could write it down on the napkins she alluringly retrieved from Armondo’s pocket so that she could have ‘the help’ try to make it at home. Armondo seemed to be patient with the middle aged bimbo, perhaps because of the

cleavage visible below her diamond necklace Boris 'burrowed' from the evidence room at the Cop Shop, perhaps because he imagined what it would look like on his own girlfriend once it 'fell off' of the suburban 'Princess' when he hugged her goodbye at the end of the meal, or perhaps because Armondo's boss, Frank Roselli's sister Carmen, was watching him very carefully.

Boris remembered that of all the Roselli's who had died on 'Good Friday' in the last four months, none were women. None were children. None were elderly grandparents too old to be effective in the streets or the board room. All of them were 'soldiers', as they liked to call themselves. The killings had been a victimless crime according to the NYPD unofficial mandates, a public service against tribe of thieves, murderers and extortionists who considered themselves above the law, though they did have a 'morality' of sorts. And, according to some, the various illegal businesses they operated kept the legal business of American Capitalism moving forward and upward somehow until a more educated and cooperative group of thugs emerged from the gutter.

There was an official pool around the after hours poker tables in the squad room about which Roselli vermin would be off'ed next as the Roselli 'curse' progressed. There they were, all sitting around the same table, Giovanni, Big Tony, Little Tony, Vincent-don't-call-me-Vinny, and Marcello. The big five, now adjuring to a table of their own after waiter delivered a message to Giovanni .

How Boris wished he had the 'servailance' ears his father, the Inspector, did which let him hear whispers from across the room, even when those whispers were uttered at the same time. How he admired his father's ability to smell a rat within a mouse's den. How he pitied the rats and the mice when they were summoned to take a ride with him to his office. And how all of those feelings of anger, regret and guilt came to a close when Boris saw a face which brought in a more practical familiarity. A black haired, blue eyed waiter whose head carriage, complexion and manner of disposing of his cigarette before resuming his food delivery duties seemed more Slavic than Sicilian.

"Alexi Minskov---!" Boris recognized the face under the olive skin Mediteranean make-over . True to his family's traditional skills, this 20 year old 'WAP' felt Detective Fedoroff's 'Inspector's' eyes on him. The young imposter dropped the tray of food he was delivering to the 'Big Five' table, the dishes smashing on the floor. Carmen marched over in her spiked heels and proceeded to yell at the new waiter as he tried to pick up the food from the floor. His hands never touched the tomato sauce-overloaded mush directly as he tried to place the split food on the same dishes from which they came with a calling card from his pocket.

"You figure out who is supposed to get which Sunday specials are supposed to go to which of Roselli boss," Boris discretely whispered Seana, very much as himself. "And collect ALL of it! Ricin goes through the skin."

Seana discretely retrieved her set of non-absorbant baggies and gloves from her new imitation Aligator handbag. Boris, as super-gay Hispanic 'Juan', pulled out his badge. "Health Inspector!" he screamed out. As he expected, all the customers in the restaurant dropped their forks, spoons and knives. As he feared, Alexi scrambled all the food he had spilt on the floor into one big pile of tomato-sauce covered mush on a mad rush out the exit door, knocking over at least three very pissed off REAL Italians in the kitchen by the timber and intensity of their expressions of discontent.

Boris made a mad dash for the alley outside. Seana pulled a pair of latex gloves over her fingers, noting with much frustration that they couldn't fit over her artificial nails. "Leave that food on the floor!" she commanded, pulling out her purse and shovelling what was on the floor into the medical sample bags inside it.

"Okay, who the fuck sent you?" 'boss-lady' Carmen yelled at Seana. "Tell me his name."

"God, I think," Seana said, catching a whiff of castor oil in the room. "We want to talk to the chef. And everyone else who serves, handles or prepares food in this---"

"We?" the men around Carmen asked Seana in a dignified yet condescending tone.

Seana looked up. Boris was gone. She felt cold, alone, and exposed. Made all the more obvious and explainable by a rip in her 'bimbo' skirt having ripped in the back, exposing her bare, naked and terrified ass.

CHAPTER 8

“So, you say is ricin in here Doctor Ryan?” the old German Professor inquired after doing a third confirmation run on the surplus assets university machines which had been faithful to him since his voluntary exit from ‘science that

had been sterilized by technology' two decades ago. "According to my equipment, and every read out from them, we have---"

"---Ricin! It has to be in here!" Seana screamed out. She ran through the readouts obtained from the antipasto specialties which she had scraped off the floor in the Napoli Restaurant before any of the Roselli Five got a chance to imbibe it.

"If the food was cooked to 175 degrees any ricin would have been degraded, Doctor Ryan. Peptide chains split to mushy sourkraut. The adenosine-stripping ability of the A chain---"

"---It was antipasto on the floor at the restaurant," the usually cool physician-scientist grunted. "Which I'm SURE has ricin in it." She marched over the readouts and thumbed through them again. Her scientific logic was escalated to instinctive intuition awakened by primal rage, then---something hit her. "I know what this is! I know..."

"Tomato sauce, mit oregano, basil and...what we used to call in the lab back home, 'laughing weed'," echoed from behind her.

"Huh?" the never-been-stoned Seana replied, turning around.

"Cannibis," Carlos said by way of clarification as he returned from the Can inside, glancing over the most recent edition of 'Journal of Irreproducible Results' from the Old Professor's personal library, reading with an open mind and laughing bone, the latest claim that the seat of consciousness was in the Nucleus Slumberus, located just below L3 in the spinal cord, otherwise known as one's ass.

"Marijuana...yes." Seana confirmed the TLC and spectromagnetic peaks with what the musty books lining the East Wall of the garage said. "Marijuana in the Italian antipasto the son of a Russian mobster was about to serve her father's Italian rivals."

Carlos helped himself to a generous portion of strudel brought in by a smiling woman half the Old Professor's age. She kissed the Scientist-Cookoo clockmaking Elder on the cheek, patted him on the 'Nucleus Slumberus' and stroked him in between his legs. "Yes, cannibus," Carlos said to Seana, feeling more alone than ever regarding the CIA plot dating back to Roman times that so many forgot or ignored. "Keep people happy with mischief like sex, drugs and rock and roll and they will never even think about revolution," he asserted.

"And keep the Roselli family stoned?" Seana countered, focusing on matters more local than global. "Why would a Russian mobster's kid who worked his way into an Italian Mafia Restaurant want to make the five remaining Captains of the family stoned instead of dead?"

"Because a happy und cookoo horse pulls a cart better than one that is dead?" the Old Professor flashed upon, as his favorite oak-carved bird came out of its wooden cave to say hello.

As Carlos saw it, the cookoo bird that came out of the clock on the wall every hour to announce the time was playful, a reminder of happy times in his childhood. But to Doctor Ryan, it was an annoyance which had grown into a rage-inducing irritant. "Why make a clock that wakes you up every hour with that...noise?!" she finally proclaimed.

"Birds chirping ist gut music, Doctor Ryan," the Old German smiled. "Soothing to Soul, ya?"

"Ya, 'soothing'," the angst ridden Doctor's reply, with a sarcastic tenor and shameful hidden 'something' behind it.

CHAPTER 9

Seated at his desk at the Precinct, Detective Boris Fedoroff read the report from Seana and her assistants in 'the lab' with disappointment but not shock. The presence of BC Gold, Port Alberni Alfafla and Maui Wowi in restaurant food was more common than Cheech and Chong or The Restaurant Reporter ever made public. A little bit of

'munchy' inducing weed in the sauce made customers order more spaghetti. Perhaps Carmen Roselli needed to make some extra 'macaroni' money for herself at the expense of the increased poundage put on the customers at her resaturant, be they strangers or family. Boris remembered that the breadsticks dipped in the special house sauce did taste a bit pleasantly 'addictive', or maybe it was the date with whom he shared that pre-meal ritual. But, Seana was a Doctor. A scientist, if given the chance. A healer perhaps, but one who could never heal herself.

He found his stare fixed on a picture of a mother, child and sperm doner at Playland in Rye which he just recently taped to the desk. "What would you do with all of this, Natasha?" he asked the woman in the picture. "As my wife, you know how much I liked to argue with you, particularly when I knew how right you were." Boris' eyes welled up when he allowed his eyes to wander to then become fixed again on the smiling child between them. "I'd do anything for you, son. But should I? There are some things that fathers should not do for their sons. And some things they have to do to insure the safety of other people's sons."

'Clearance the Clerk' emerged from the Captain's office with another load of files under his arm, bypassing two rows of detectives en route, dumping his full load on Boris' desk..

"If I close my eyes, will these files go away this time?" the always overworked workahollic Boris smiled with a tired face, closing his eyes for real this time to see if the experiment will work.

"I don't think so, Detective Fedoroff." the peach-fuzz mustached Uniform with his new Marine Corp cropped head replied. "I thought you liked being useful, Sir."

"Only because it beats being useLESS," Boris replied. He opened his eyes and perused the top sheets on the five new cases with which he was now being 'honored' to take on.

Seargent Jimmy Pappas emerged from Lieutenant Holmes' Lair en route to the Captain's Cave with another shit assignment he'd no doubt turn into a shinola personal opportunity. "Al's is in the box waiting for you, Detective Fedoroff. You want me to soften him up for you?"

"The purpose of interrogation is the get information is to extract information, not to humilate criminals, even if they are guilty. Besides, all of us are guilty of something. And even naive innocence is a kind of guilt in a world where---"

"---Al? Alexi? Alexi Minskov, Sir?" Clearance the Clerk inquired.

Boris and Jimmy engaged in a silent, rapid and very discreet conversation with words spoken between the eyes. Jimmy seemed to agree that Clearance was out of line, and out of character, asking about Alexi Minskov. The pathologically-kind son of the DA had apparently found out about one of the most promising up and coming Ruskie mobster's son being in custody. The confidential info about Alexi's arrest must have already gone up the Department ladder in a Precinct where the honor code of confidentiality was a luxury few could still afford. The definition of that 'H' word changed daily, sometimes in ways that sometimes served the Collective human soul, and sometimes in ways that served survival of the individual human in question. "Yes, the rights of the individual vs the rights of the Collective," Boris contemplated to himself, as most of his countrymen had since the Czar was 'requested' to leave office back in 1917.

Alexi Minskov smirked as Boris entered the windowless ten by twelve foot white-walled cell reserved for special guests of the Precinct. "I appreciate the private room," the son of the toughest mob boss in South Brooklyn said through tired bloodshot eyes which had been kept open by a light bulb which was accidently forty watts too hot and which didn't seem to turn off, with a clock on the wall that announced the time every fiveteen minutes for the last twenty four hours.

"A cookoo clock, Comrade Fedoroff." Alexi related in a still-smooth voice as the bird anounced the hour yet again. "Every time that creature creeps out of his house, I think of new ways to strangle it, and feed the meat to its own babies," the 20 year old punk who looked more like an International Film star smiled. "Just like my father will feed the meat of your 'law abiding' families, and your 'special' son to---"

Before Alexi could finish another Minskov speculation, which so often became a reality soon after it was announced, he found himself flat on his ass. Then pushed against the wall, Boris' fist grabbing hold of his collar.

"Good, Detective Fedoroff." Alexi smirked though a choked trachea. "You ARE your father's son."

"Tell me where you make the ricin," Boris grunted through a hoarse voice which evoked his departed father's laughing ridicule. "And who is the next intended victim!" the NYPD Detective went on as Alexi's earings reminded him of the medals of distinction on his own father's blood-soaked KGB uniform. "And what your father intends to do to civilians after he kills off all the Roselli soldiers!"

"Or, what, Officer Fedoroff, Sir?" Alexi inquired with an air of superiority worthy of his family name and heritage.

Boris had no answers. Killing Alexi would silence the only lead he had to a mob war that would eventually lead to something that affected hard working 'civilians'. Russian immigrants first, no doubt, as being most cruel to your own people came so naturally to the Slavic mentality. And with ricin, one of the

"You read the Golag Archepelico books as thoroughly as I have," Alexi informed his captor. "We both know the eighteen ways to breakdown a prisoner. But I know how a prisoner can break down his guards. And this American system of 'justice' seems to make equals of both of us."

Alexi was right. This wasn't Quantanimo, it was New York City. An ACLU lawyer behind every abused prisoner. A Cop who would turn a buddy into Internal Affairs for abuse of excessive force behind every prisoner who deserved hanging if said prisoner was clever or connected enough. And a prison system created by the Cops which was run by the criminals from the inside, a living hell for any Cop who wound up behind bars even for the briefest times.

Boris watched his hands let go of Alexi's neck and contemplate another way. His anger came back upon himself. Why did he lose control like that? "If any one of your family THINKS about doing anything to my son---"

"---it would be nothing personal, just business." Alexi smirked. "Like your wife? Who I know...."

Boris held his ground. Alexi seemed to expected another beating he could show off to his father. Instead, the Detective laughed, paced around the room, and offered the prisoner a candybar from his pocket.

Alexi gobbled the candybar down. He was hungry, and finally showed it. At the moment when his baser and weaker gustatory instincts came to full fruition, Boris sprang the question.

"Weed in the Roselli's famous tomato sauce. Very clever. And artistic, Alexi," Boris said, taking out a candy bar himself. "Getting the heroin movers stoned. Poetic justice. A worthy strategy for a man who is smarter than his father."

Alexi seemed surprized by the compliment, elevated in self esteem in a way that he never demonstrated since the time of his arrest after making Boris run seven blocks and use the help of three squad cars to ring him in. "I'm a soldier in my father's army."

"You're a pawn in his game, Alexi," Boris offered with a fatherly compassion to his voice. A cigarette, Alexi's favorite Turkish brand, in his hand as a peace offering, placing it into his mouth and lighting it. "With a mind that could achieve..."

"Achieve what, Boris the Boring Boar? The Lifeless Pig." Alexi challenged, his chin going up. Puffing smoke into his interogator's face.

"Yes, I'm a Cop," Boris confessed through a cough. "A flatminded, flatlined on some days, flatfoot inspector. How should I know what a brilliant, artistic mind like yours is capable of designing, and doing. In the service of

your father, who should by all right, be YOUR servant, Don Minskov.” Boris saw the workings of Alexi’s devious mind, and abused heart. By all unofficial accounts, Alexi was the least liked of his father’s sons, and wanted back in the ‘the boss’. Maybe the ‘boss’ was a loving father in his own way, administering tough love to all of his sons. Each had to prove the worthiness to be under his roof, his krysha, but Alexi seemed to want to build his own house.

“I have a plan, Alexi.” Boris unlocked the cuffs which had broken the skin around his wrists, working their way into the tendons. “What if you work for me, privately.” Detective took off his badge, crushed it under his shoe heel and dumped it in the ash tray. He opened the door, and sat down.

Alexi briskly walked to the door, then stopped, staring up and down the hallway. “I get shot while escaping?”

“Too easy, for me, and you,” Boris smiled. “But I do request one thing. You hit me.”

“Why?” Alexi smirked. “If I do, you will enjoy the pain.”

“And if you don’t, I’ll kill you where you fucking stand,” Detective Fedoroff declared with a no-nonsense stare more serious than any Minskov boss or KBG Inspector.

Alexi clenched his hand in a fist and aimed towards Boris’ testicals. The Russian-turned-American Cop laughed, madly. With each expression of inner madness from Boris, Alexi’s arrogance shrank into boyish cowardness. The punk, who was a boy after all, couldn’t hit his captor. All he could do was retreat into the corners of the room as the Mad Russian Cop condescendingly ordered him to hit him. “You coward. You piece of shit. You loser!” Boris laughed madly as the super-stud Minskov shivered in fear and wet his pants, finally running out the door, toward the exit door and into the streets.

Boris contemplated the matter. Jimmy Pappas entered the ‘private honeymoon suite’, lighting up a cigar under the no-smoking sign. “So, Comrade?”

“He’s an idiot and an asshole,” Boris lamented. “A disgrace to both sides of the law. Your worst enemy, particularly when he is your friend. A walking corpse who probably does deserve to die early and painfully.”

“And?” Pappas inquired.

“He didn’t kill anyone.” Boris said with pity in his face.

“And you know this Detective Fedoroff because?”

“It runs on my father’s side of the family,” Boris smiled with pride and shame. “Sir,” he added, with a bow, followed by taking a portion of the chair he broke while ‘accidentally’ kicking the legs out from under it. Boris clenched it in his right hand, knocking his thigh with it as his ancestors had done with riding crops for centuries.

“Alexi is being followed, right Boris?”

“By the best undercover guy I know. An elderly Hispanic gentleman who my fellow ‘countrymen’ will never recognize, Sir.” The reply as Boris’ thigh started to hurt, the intensity of the blows felt only by himself.

“And you want me to go on vacation, Boris?”

“You won the lottery at the travel agency. A vacation to Hawaii for you, and any woman you want to take with you.”

“Even if it’s my wife?” the usually colorful Greek cop said with the loyalty of a loyal dog and, under the ‘indescressions’, devoted husband.

Boris extended his hand out to his partner, lying with as much honesty as he could. “You won the lottery at the travel agency. And deserve a vacation. Have a great time for both of us, Jimmy.”

Pappas seemed impressed by his subordinate referring to him by his first name. Something Boris had never done. A once in a lifetime event, just like miraculously winning a travel certificate at a lottery in the middle of Little Odessa on a ticket that Boris had purchased himself.

“One thing that you have to promise me first, Detective Fedoroff.” Sargent Pappas insisted as he gazed at the blood spilling from Boris’ thigh onto the floor under his trousers. “Take care of yourself. And what’s left of your family.”

Boris agreed, making a pledge of his own. To take care of other people’s families as well. The collective and the individual must be served in unison, though the history of his self-torturing country of origin said otherwise.

CHAPTER 10

Carlos had acquired different aliases in his seventy or so very odd years on God’s earth. They ranged from Brazillian call girl to Italian art expert, some for profit, some for survival and some to hide from himself who he really was---a Janitor who could see where the real dirt was, without the knowledge or courage to clean it up. He was always willing to fight the good fight, always benched when the trumpets heralded the ‘real’ warriors to battle. Such were Carlos’ recollections as he adopted the look of a generic Slavic nobody to follow Russian ‘somebody’ Alexi Minskov through the MTA trains and buses all the way out to Rockaway, then along the Boardwalk whose architecture and flavor hadn’t changed in a Century.

To Carlos’ oversized nose, the ocean smelled old and new, despite the foamy New Jersey garbage it gently washed up onto the shore. Meanwhile, Alexi availed himself of the services of a woman who called her up to an apartment, no doubt to experience the kind of passion or pleasure which Carlos boasted about but in actuality, never experienced himself.

Carlos had grown up as the middle, ‘uneventful’ son in a family of five boys. Two became Cops working for Batista in Havana, two became revolutionaries who fought for Fidel in the mountains. Someone had to stay at home and take care of Mama, particularly after Carlos’ father died in a fishing accident that had nothing to do with politics. The then twenty-something ‘uneventful’ Carlos blamed himself for finding his mother dead in her bed

with three empty bottles of medications next to her lifeless body. The non-political bookworm who read about history instead of making it found himself required to take a side. At first it was with Uncle Fidel, the bearded Revolutionary who promised free education to all who wanted or needed it. Then it was the Americans across the waters when his older brother Raul was executed by his fellow Revolutionaries for having Counter-Revolutionary literature in his backpack.

It was a long ride across the hundred mile stretch between Northern Cuba and South Florida, but Carlos had made it to freedom, opportunity and, he hoped, usefulness. He was given a job in a library, cleaning the floors. He was denied access to enlistment in the 'non-existent' brigade of Anti-Castro freedom fighters because he was 'medically unfit for service', according to the wack-job recruiter who cited his bum left leg and less than optimal eyesight as the reasons for discharge after the first day of basic training. In reality, it had more to do with the way the recruiter winked at Carlos after seeing him stripped down outside the shower. The young Carlos assumed that American men in power liked the men under them to like them back. The way business was done, so Carlos assumed.

Little did Carlos know that it was a 'test' which inaccurately labelled him unhirable for many jobs, or Callings, afterwards. And little did the recruiter and the other Cuban freedom fighters know that the American air support promised them at the Bay of Pigs was pulled back at the last minute as a result of a political blunder or as Carlos suspected, or needed to believe, a precalculated 'accident'.

Though screwed by his brothers, his parents, his Old Country and his New Country, Carlos needed to know that there was something which didn't screw you. At first it was God. Then, a template of Goodness which was somehow still activatable after God had abandoned it. The world had to have a template of goodness in it. Without that conviction, Carlos would lose his mind forever. Something he learned very quickly after being admitted to several hospitals for an aching stomach then finding himself in a locked ward being treated for a hurting head.

The Atlantic wind felt cold all of a sudden. Even with the 'Ruski' fur hat covering his ears and Latino face. Under such head and ear covering all Russians looked the same, as did all bearded revolutionaries in Cuba when wearing a 'Fidel' cap. Alexi emerged with a different kind of hat, a gansta baseball cap which when the visor was worn to the back meant 'I bad', and when worn to the side mean 'I dumb'. In keeping with the way Soviet soldiers wore their hats when not directly under the bootheel of their superiors, Alexi wore the visor of the New York Giants cap straight ahead, and turned upward, exposing his forehead. No sweat on it, the eyes underneath bright, confident and optimistic. Just like the Russian advisors he remembered in Cuba whose primary political alliance was mostly to themselves.

Carlos wondered about the other women in the building, particularly the ones upstairs who stared out the window with sadness, longing and desperation. They all had such young faces, and old eyes. Alexi's ladyfriend at the doorway wore a main of long, red hair that flowed down to her waist and seemed well satisfied by her transaction with her. The first payment from Alexi was fistful of cash. The second, a bag of 'baking sugar', as was the local slang, from his left pocket. The third was Alexi allowing her to kiss him on the cheek and to believe that he actually did love her.

Alexi's phone rang. He answered, his romantic voice turning instantly into something firm and vicious. The kind of tone that Carlos heard from the guards at the Cuban prison just before his very Catholic brother Raul committed suicide in his cell. Carlos shuffled his way after the young Russian mogul as he strutted down the boardwalk and made a left turn towards a convenience store.

For all of Alexi's smarts, he didn't seem to notice or care that he was being followed. In the plain grey overcoat, the over-the-ears imitation brown hat, or the slacks which didn't match his headgear or coat, Carlos felt even more ordinary than the character he invented in his head really was. 'Ivan', as Carlos called his new persona, had a wife and two kids, both of whom had left him. He was a drunk who couldn't hold his liquor and a gambler who lost every bet. A loser in the Old Country and the New one that allowed others to become winners. A service of sorts, perhaps. A 'noble' sacrifice. A harmless 'nobody' which, perhaps at the end of this Mission, would become a somebody. Such was Carlos' hope and dream,

While Carlos pretended to buy some bologna, Alexi picked up some cigarettes, said something to the clerk in Russian, and helped himself to a fistful of beef jerky. Carlos turned the tape recorder in his pocket on to record the conversation. Clear, clean sound, which Detective Fedoroff would be able to make sense of, until an unexpected visitor came up to Carlos and started to rant off in English.

“Did you know that Jesus Christ died for your sins?” the Asian post-adolescent in the Caucasion black suit said. His partner, another clean-faced Mormon with military length blonde hair answered the question with a musical “Yes, he did, brother.”

The Asian adolescent kept asking more questions about Carlos’ relationship with God and satisfactions about his life., the WASP ‘Comrade’ answering with pre-rehearsed answers that he believed, but really didn’t understand. And interestingly in ‘Lonnnggggg Islantttese’. Meanwhile, Alexi and his Comrade across the counter talked more business.

Carlos stuffed the pockets of his coat with cold cuts and pushed his way to the counter, throwing each item in front of the assistant clerk. The droning duo of Evangelists tossed out money to pay for Carlos’ food, but would not shut up, their mouths ever smiling. Alexi and his associate shared a laugh at the ‘bum’s’ expense, appended by the clerk handing the young Minskov mogul a paper bag from under the counter. Alexi walked out the door and strolled three steps when he was met by two well dressed men who seemed to want his help with a problem. Carlos broke his way free from the Missionaries who were trying to save his already lost Soul, when he was stopped by a Slavic Giant at the door, whose hand reached out ‘requesting’ some money. The not-so-jolly Red giant pointed to the items in Carlos’ coat which his Missionary friends had not paid for.

Carlos emptied his pockets of each other items, and felt his hands on the tape recorder. He lost track of the buttons. Which was on, which was off, and which was ‘erase and re-record’. And just as Alexi was called into a limo outside that outclassed any car else on the street. The steel-cold driver opened the door. The young mogul entered, and was driven down the street, disappearing into traffic.

Thankfully, Carlos’ bad memory with names was not so with numbers, or letters. The Missionaries found a transvestite hooker to convert., clearly believing that she was indeed female. Once dismissed by the guard at the store, Carlos called the license plate of the limo and its movement in to the number Boris had given him. After having given the information, a voice thanked him. One which he didn’t recognize, or trust.

CHAPTER 11

A sleep-starved Boris sipped his McDonald’s coffee in the Rent a Wreck Buick parked outside of Nana Gabriella’s Pizzeria, now Madame Lewinskov’s Tea Room. “Why didn’t you go on you vacation?” he asked the donut-gobbling man next to him.

“When YOU go on vacation, I go on vacation, Boris,” Seargent Jimmy Pappas replied as he picked up the phone, answered it, then followed the command of the grovelly Hispanic lunatic at the other end of it. It took three tries to get the ignition to get the rusted out clunker with the rusted exhaust pipe and thumping duct-taped exhaust pipe around and two Patrol Cars occupied by Uniforms at that time of month where they traffic ticket quotas had to be met. . “That your pal up there?” he continued as he spotted Alexi’s limo, licence plate ‘KGB007’. “The motherfucker has a sense of humor.”

“He isn’t my pal!” Boris shot back. “And he has an aura of ‘cool’ which is at its core, cruel, not funny,” he continued from a more cerebral aspect of his rage. “In my country it was customary to be cruel. Here it is cool to be cruel.”

“You’ve been at too many film festivals,” the Kojak wannabee replied. “Cool is just another kind of competition here. And competition is what made America great. Selection of the fittest, strongest and freest, Comrade.”

In some ways Jimmy was right. When it came down to how things worked outside the ideals in Boris’ head, the books he read, and the ones he wished he could write, you can bet you last babushka that the two decade NYPD

workhorse was always right. Freedom had nothing to do with nobility. Strength had nothing to do with intellect. So Boris hoped and prayed was wrong every day of his increasingly informed life.

Alexi's 007 limo weaved its way onto 20th Ave toward Bath Street. The driver put on the blue flashers on the dash. Most of the cabs in front of it gave way as it edged its way, interestingly, away from Brighton Beach towards the Belt Parkway. Pappas plowed a hole through the traffic with his most colorfully scary Greek and a horn that wouldn't let up.

"The airport, maybe," Boris voiced from the place of his deepest fear. "Once he's on a plane---"

"---We could call in the cavalry. Ya know, our guys?"

"Who tipped these motherfuckers off before. This time, no goddamn shithead cocksucker NYPD fuckoffs are getting in MY way to nail these cunt fucks who ruined MY country and are half way to completely fucking up yours, goddamnit!" Boris' anger fumed into hot sweat, his brain boxed in and focused on primal rage.

"That's seven, Detective Fedoroff." Jimmy calmly noted.

"Seven blocks till the Belt Parkway?"

"Seven 'expressions of unintelligent, redundant and unprofessional language'," Sergeant Pappas replied, with a Slavic accent added to the notation. "And half of them referring to us." he added with his own indignant rage.

Boris put his hands up in the air, bowing his head slightly. Saying 'I'm sorry' would lead to another scolding for actions he had not considered offenses.

"Look, Boris," Jimmy said as he picked up another glazed donut from the dash and stuck it into his face. "I want to nail these guys as much as you do. Even though these Russian mobsters are doing a better job getting rid of the WAP, Chink and Spic Mafias than we ever did. And if we're gonna bring in the big fish that gobbles up all the little fishes, we gotta keep our ears open, mouth shut and eyes...."

Jimmy's peripheral attention wandered to a sunglassesed woman in a short-hemmed business suit whose legs looked way too good to be real. Boris clearly saw the limo stopping off at a flower shop, featuring in its window a decorative plant he recognized all too well as his partner pulled the car off to the other side of the street.

"Look at person A so that person B has no idea you're looking at him, Jim?" Boris 'asked' his partner while his beer bellied partner seemed to be asking the babe seated on the bench things he had not asked his wife for years. "Bitch above neck, beauty below it? Special kind of monster."

"I'll check out my monster, you check out yours," Pappas continued as he took off his seatbelt and discretely pushed the emerging hot dog in his right trouser pocket into a less noticeable place. "And I was never here."

"Is that for your wife, or our bosses?" Boris inquired, under his breath. He pulled a NY Mets Baseball Cap over his head, wearing it American style over his freshly-shorn temples, adjusted the 'Stalin special' mustache glued onto his upper lip and walked over toward the flower shop with a wide, short-strided gait. "The character starts in your feet," he remembered from the semester of acting courses he took in his university training, claiming to his father and the authorities that the only reason for taking it would make him a better undercover Cop, and so that he could eventually spy on Counter-Revolutionary actors.

The 'never want to tell a lie but know I have to for everyone's good' Boris found himself fulfilling that promise now as he shuffled into the shop behind Alexi's strut, not being noticed by anyone. But noticing much from behind the tinted glasses. All the faces looked similar, particularly the chins. For reasons biological or perhaps occupational, everyone in the Minskov 'family' had a protruding cleft chin which was unnaturally narrow at its base, but in a way which was aesthetically pleasing to the eye, and the camera. Captain Dimitri Minskov, the most famous leader of the clan, who exploits in the War against Hitler were legendary, whose heroics were verified in inconsistent and suspicious ways by the well-paid Sergeants and Privates in his command. Dimitri went on to use his Medals of

Valour and his 'Heroic Chin' after the War was over when he, three of his five sons, two of his three daughters were up on the Silver Screen in virtually every State Funded feature film after son number two struck it big in yet another remake of 'Peter the Great'. Son number three, Ivan Minskov, went on to become a bigger star behind the scenes during the Bresnev administration. A born master of means of psychological, and other forms of influence, he psychological become a top level television Producer in Leningrad, while still keeping his KGB job and his father's various black market enterprises alive. When the Wall came dumbing down in Berlin, Ivan Minskov sneaked over thr rubble and soon became a rapidly up and coming low budget movie mogul in New York. Ivan's son Alexi aspired to be an actor, though his father wanted him to become a producer.

Now, as Alexi wiped the last of the Mederanean 'tan' from his perfectly shaped face in the mirror of the Flower Shop, Alexi seemed to be the model Minskov, a Prince who already considered himself the King. His more business minded brothers two were behind the counter on the phone with loaders at the shipyards, whispfully speaking about widgets and rubbles with an underlying tone that was about life and death. Alexi's sister, Sonya, smiled to the customers with very American English after talking them into expensive sales, a mastress at hiding her condescension. As for Alexi, he was on his two Cell phones, saying 'I love you, and only you' with his most romantic Russian-tinged English to girlfriend number one and girlfriend number two. Keeping the alternating conversation going by putting them on hold because Sean Penn and Anthony Hopkins wanted to get some 'artistic and cultural feedback' on a line change in his newest script at a closed-door rehearsal in Soho that would make Alexi late again for his dates with the two unsuspecting 'ladies'.

The Flower Shop cover was new. By the layered scrapings on the walls near the bathroom and behind the construction in progress, the shop had been a Bodega, a Video Store, a Used Book Store that, and now, with some glass enclosures and lights, an establishment that could grow, sell and import plants of many varieties. Maybe the Minskovs could make it work legitimately, as there was nothing more effective to hide Brooklyn grunge like Old World Flowers.

Using what he could from his Hellenic partner's conversations with his guilt-throwing Athenian grandmother, Boris was able to make even Sonya Minskov think that his English was as poor as her Greek. While nodding affirmatively 'ne, beautiful' to each selection of plants and flowery fragrances, Boris was able to see what he suspected had been in the Minskov family business all the time. Amidst the jungle of floral delights that barraged the brain with olfactory cannon balls of beauty was cannibus, scattered around the base of the more easily labeled flowers, of course. Probably something Alexi had done, and which most Russians, and perhaps most Americans did as well. Always do something to show to your friends that you are defying the authorities, as a day without doing something illegal was a sign of cowardess or surrender.

It was the decorative plant from South Carolina that worried Boris most. Ricinus Communis, it read as its descriptor. Legal to sell, and very popular, though only the most eclectic buyers knew that it could be used to make ricin. Evidence that this was the source of the toxin that killed Vito and Frank Roselli, enough to put everyone in the Minskov clan in Labor Camps back home, not enough to even get a Search Warrant in America. Something else was needed. Lots of something else's.

On his way to the counter to purchase the bouquet of overpriced roses for his 'yinekasoo', his young girl, Boris' nose caught a whiff of something from an elderly Minkov who he didn't recognize from the New York streets, the sessions with the anti-mob FBI specialists in DC, or the 'good old' days of his youth when patrolling the backroads of Moscow keeping them safe from 'huligans and traitors'.

"Castor oil!" Boris observed slurring out of his mouth, localizing the byproduct of ricin production on the back of the elderly woman with the Minskov chin, but not the vicious eyes to match.

"Yes, is very good for...how you say....?" The half-crippled, hunchbacked woman with the sagging breasts smiled with a charm that seemed more human than manipulate.

"'Back', Aunt Tasha," model-perfect Sonya replied in American English, her aire of condescension containing the polish of Upscale New York, the push of Upper Crust Moscow. "We are in America. You must learn English."

Tasha's hunched her back another thirty degrees, muttering indignations about life, her insolent relatives, then herself, in Russian. "My life is an insult to myself," she repeated several times in the rant that she was apparently allowed to express. As long it was with her head bowed down and eyes looking at the ground, and she confined her discourses with herself and God to the back room, her next assigned destination, Boris surmized.

"Your yinekasoo, Mister Pappadapolous...she will love them," Sonya spoke slowly with a wide smile. Boris gleefully paid ten twenty dollar bills to pay for what was listed as a hundred dollar item, the mistake going unnoticed by Sonya's freshly manicured fingers.

Part of Boris felt ripped off. Perhaps because the extra hundred dollars could have gone to take care of children who needed it. Or more particularly, the child he was responsible for taking care of, whose medical bills kept escalating with every new specialist who miraculously untied another knot on the complex disease which was torturing said child's mind and body. Everyone was here. Except one man 'Ivan the Terrible', or as his mistresses referred to him, 'Ivan the Terrific'. The leader of the clan who had more brains and balls than all of his children combined. And as for those children, a 'what if' came to mind.

Boris couldn't resist. He pointed to the ricin communis ornamental plant. "For patetasu...my father?" he asked Sonya. "How much?"

While Sonya worked out the price, Boris calculated another economics. What if the younger Minskovs could kill their elders off with ricin? What if former movie mogul 'Ivan the Terrific', otherwise known as 'Ivan the Terrible', was about to be poisoned by the same toxin which his family was using to kill off the last remaining Italian mob family in Brooklyn? And what if, with a little 'help', an old Greek escalated the play to its final and justified conclusion? "Little Fish eat Big Fish, and the heroes dine on shrimp afterwards", Boris saw on the marquee of the fact-based script he was writing in his head. A long title, but one which could be abbreviated by one word "Justice". One detail remained to be taken care of first before any move was taken.

CHAPTER 12

“Your hair!” Seana commented to the now ‘tee-shirt and jeans’ Boris who met her at the hospital entrance at New York Medical College, way Upstate from her normal working place by Manhattan standards. “Did you, ya know, lose a bet?”

“I guess the razor slipped,” Boris smiled sardonically as he brushed the very unprofessionally-executed cut that clipped his temples down to the scalp, up to a crown that now only contained patches of barely-combable-length hair which was dyed dark brown. On the way to the reception desk, he caught himself in the mirror, the expression on his face turning into a sour crown. “For an assignment....And in other ways too, it was...a necessary change.”

“It makes you look...younger?” Seana said.

“Military,” Boris winced, disappointment turning into a weird sense of pride that showed on his face, a feeling of shame for feeling that pride underneath his eyes.

“Yes, military,” Seana smiled, running her fingers over the stubble which was once lush sensuous looking hair. “Like mine used to be...”

“You were in the military?” Boris asked Seana.

“No, I just...did some ‘necessary changes’ once,” she confessed, resolved to reveal no more, no matter how much she wanted to.

A nurse wheeled a child past them. A bald girl whose body smelled of radiation burns, her bones protruding under her stretched skin, her smile optimistic as friends and relations put on their best happy faces, conferring upon her hugs, kisses and cheerfully colorful balloons.

“Do you think she will make it?” Seana asked.

“If she wants to, or has to,” Boris replied from the depths of despair. “Well motivated patients always get better, right Doctor Ryan?”

“Yes, God and science willing,” she warned.

“What the doctor told me when my father died,” Boris confessed as he led Seana to the elevator.

With each floor going up to the patient in question Seana saw her Russian colleague go through the stages of grief. Shock, the kind a doctor sees when he tells a mother she has lost her child. Grief, which the nurses get to absorb when they present the now motherless child with the paperwork. Anger which she vents at God, the Doctor or her ex-husband for not doing all that could be done. Then action---when she moves ahead with her life, even though it will always feel empty in ways that cannot be filled no matter how many children love her at home.

“To the left,” Boris said calmly, and resolutely, inviting Seana to exit the elevator first. The corridor was long, deserted, dimly lit and led to a ‘closed for renovation’ sign on what looked like a janitor’s closet.

Taking a key out of his pocket, Boris opened the door. Inside lay a Soul whose smile was big, wide and contagious. “Papa!” he exclaimed loudly from his bed in a voice that sounded all too familiar to Seana.

“Autism, grade 4.” Boris whispered to her as he prepared himself for greeting the five year old. He took off his hat, showing off the freshly-cropped head underneath it, matching all too painfully the nearly hairless head on the lad. The nurse turned down the covers, took out a pack of smokes, and collected money from Boris on the way out the door. The body of her patient didn’t match the face with which he greeted Boris nor the enthusiasm with which he hugged him. Tubes stuck out of every limb of his emaciated body. “Vladimir Chou” was the name on the chart, though there wasn’t a trace of Asian blood evidenced in his biology. His blood work was another story. High calcium with liver, kidney and rapidly approaching red cell degenerative changes. The lumps under his jaw and behind his knees four times their normal size.

“What kind of cancer?” Seana asked the nurse as Boris spoke pleasant and happy Russian to his son, perhaps more to uplift his spirit than Vladimir.

“The kind of cancer that only God, or those that defy His Will, can cure,” the thirty-something overworked private nurse said though a wide yawn as she counted the money paid to her, in cash, stroking her unwashed platinum mane which had very white roots. “Or perhaps not.”

Seana took a look around the room. Every piece of equipment in it was state of the art, and beyond the art. As were the treatments given when she perused the foot high list of charts and medical reports. Western and Alternative treatments which were bold, expensive and in some cases, blatantly illegal.

“You big specialist from Canada?” the Nurse asked with a Ukrainian accent.

“Specialist from big country,” Seana smiled sadly. “How’s he doing today?” she inquired.

“Old doctor trick, yes,” the Slavic assistant replied, catching Seana in the act red handed. “You ask me about patient so I don’t have to ask you about what you know, Doctor.”

Seana took her moment, then another, then another. But finally she had to speak. “I don’t know how to treat this kind of cancer, or autism,” she admitted.

“A doctor who says ‘I don’t know’, and who does not want money to tell you beautiful bullshit answer that will make you feel better,” the Nurse smiled back. “This makes you smartest Doctor I know. And brokest. Probably lonliest too.”

Seana felt the hit, straight between the eyes, down to the brain stem. Whoever this Nanny was, she was more than what she seemed. Perhaps she knew why Boris was so obsessed with nailing the Russian Mob, even though they seemed to be offing Italian-American mobsters faster than any Commission Bobby Kennedy or J. Edgar Hoover put together. And why Vladimir Chou had so many other names on his medical charts since he was admitted to this suburban hospital and seven others in the City. “I could sure use a smoke,” Seana said.

“Perhaps” the Nurse said, seeming to know that Seana had not touched a cigarette in ten years. “But... Detective Fedoroff needs some privacy.”

“My name is Seana,” Doctor Ryan said with an extended hand to the Nurse as they dragged their tired feet down the hallway to a wing that really was under renovations.

“Tasha,” the Nurse said, offering Seana a Russian cigarette, then smiling with delight as the Canadian White Bread Newby to the Big Apple emitted a hoarse cough after the smoke entered her non-inspiring mouth. “They take getting used to.”

“Boris seems like a good man. Dedicated. Intelligent. And maybe more Catholic than even I am?” Seana advanced.

“Excuse?”

“Definition of being Catholic. Apologizing for rain. And Detective Fedoroff seems to feel responsible for more than what he should feel responsible for,” the good Doctor offered with as much ‘bad girl’ finesse as she could muster.

Tasha stopped and gazed out the window at a construction site below. Her stare was drawn to a flower delivery truck that had just pulled up to an Italian Restaurant across the street, two patrons in the establishment looking very familiar.

“Special delivery for... Vincent Roselli?” Seana speculated.

“Us, Doctor Ryan!” Tasha spat out, noting something on her pager. She pulled Seana’s face out of view, the dragging her down the hall back to the room. “Schnell!” the Ukrainian screeched under her breath in German to a shocked Seana, pulling her down the hall ahead of footsteps approaching fast. Tasha grabbed hold of two large black bags stored in between a wheel barrel and a pile of foul smelling cement blocks and made a run for the janitor’s closet, pointing Seana to the exit door.

“But...but!”

“Schnell! Now! Schnell!” Tasha blasted out with an accent that sounded more German than Ukrainian as she raced down the corridor towards Vladimir, taking off her shoes.

Seana always followed orders, but for some reason, making a run for safety felt like the most unsafe thing possible, for herself, and her new Slavic family. The footsteps were following her now. At first from one man, then two, then three, each speaking Russian. Surmising that she had become a decoy, Seana grabbed a white lab coat, put it on, and did a Doctorly walk into and out of the maze of supply rooms manned by after hours help. The workers ahead of her fled, the smell of Port Alberni Alphapha in their wake. Then, condoms dropped from a third level shelf by ‘mice’ that giggled in what seemed like Spanish. Then, a bear staring her straight in the face.

“Miss Ryan?” he said, appending it with a gentlemanly bow and an expression very aristocratically Russian.

“No...” Seana stammered in a Hispanic accent, pointing to the name tag on the coat. “I am...” she froze.

“Jose Martinez?” the kindly, tastefully balding, sexy-over-sixty Russian bear smiled. “Very good sex change operation, Doctor Martinez. You get the surgery in Sweden?”

“It’s” Seana said... “Doctor Ryan, Mister...Minskov?” she speculated.

“Ivan!” he proclaimed with a jolly belly-laugh. “And you Canadians should not say your accusations with questions. I am right?”

“Yes, you are correct.” Seana affirmed. Two orderlies who didn’t fit their uniforms came up behind her. “I don’t know where he is...”

“I just want to talk. Detante.” The Boss of Russian Bosses said in a way that sounded convincing. To demonstrate his point he handed Seana his gun, inviting her to shoot him, inviting his assistants to do the same.

Seana was at a loss for words and actions. She pretended to hold the Boss and his goons hostage. Though she felt the fool, they didn’t laugh, didn’t snicker, and didn’t even elevate their chin in that uniquely Russian way of boasting their superiority.

“Talk. This is all.” Ivan repeated.

“He won’t listen,” Tasha said as she entered from what seemed like the ethers. “Detective Fedoroff has become a man who has nothing to lose.”

“The cancer?” Ivan replied, his back turned.

“Sometimes, when the hand of God is asleep, the hand of man must intervene.”

“Or the hand of woman!” Tears rolled down Ivan’s face. “On My Godson!” he sobbed.

“Perhaps in his grandfather’s eyes, but not in God’s eyes,” Tasha shot back, the rest of her remarks ended by Ivan grabbing a scalpel blade, pushing her into a wall, cutting her throat, then wiping the blood off on her hair. He spit into her lifeless eyes then motioned for his men to follow him out.

Seana stood alone, facing Tasha’s dead face, with eyes that seemed to want to speak to her. Dr. Ryan had entered pathology because she could deal with the dead, but not with dying. She stroked Tasha’s blood soaked hair. The ‘only want to do medicine and not life’ Newfoundland Doctor now had blood on her hands. And if she couldn’t find and effectively help the now childless Boris fast, it was certain that his death would be next.

CHAPTER 13

The train ride back to Manhattan seemed endless as Seana attempted to become Dr. Ryan again. Within two hours she had gained and lost a surrogate husband in Boris, and allowed herself to feel a maternal bond with his son. One which had the eyes that she once imagined were on the child in her own womb, who never got to use them. Finding the present unbearable, she sought shelter in a tortured past.

That night when the man she least expected knocked on her bedroom door when everyone else in the house was gone. Asked her to take off her clothes, then begged her to, then forced her to at the point of a rusted knife he had just sharpened into a point sharp enough to split a hair. Forced her to say 'I love you'. Made her lay down on the bed, spread her legs and put the handcuffs around her arms and legs. Though she knew the man, she didn't that night. If indeed he was a man at all. A madness had overtaken him. Something that her crazy mother said was contagious. A madness she could not tell her father, or her mother, about once it came into her bedroom, life and womb. Her inner senses smelt the musty scent of fish on her 'lovers' clothes. Tasted the stench of eighty proof Newfoundland Screech on his breath. Felt the hard grip of hands that felt so. Saw the eyes of the rapist when he came back to his senses and unlocked the cuffs just as the local Police were making their rounds. Heard herself deny to Contable Brady that the man in the room with her had anything to do with the crime. The punishment for the offense would mean his confinement to a straight jacket for life, and a mark of shame which would brand her as the most offensive of rape victims. A 'miscalculation' of 'love' which remained un-confessed to Priest, parents or even God. But one which was confessed every day to the crying child inside her that was conceived that night, but disposed of that night in Holland the day before she shaved her head as far below the scalp as she could, the buzzer on the clippers evoking in her inner the baby's silent screams.

The conductor announced the next stop. "White Plains". The buildings outside the tinted windows were very white. But unlike the very plain 'comfortable' suburban commuters, the 'ordinary' Hispanic-looking woman who came into the car and sat across the aisle from her was hardly plain. A teenage mother clad in the what smelled like third hand Salvation Army jeans and jean jacket worn down to nothing at the elbows and collar. Nursing a baby whose eyes looked very much like what Seana thought would have been hers. His name was "Sean", interestingly and sadistically enough. The child sucked his mother's teat, but sought something else from Seana as he stared at her.

"So, you've re-incarnated and come to visit me, aye?" Seana thought in intense Newfy dialect while conducting a one way dialogue with the child who she decided to now name after herself, rather than its father.

'Sean' smiled.

"Don't ya be smilin' like that now, boy," she warned the child. "Not at me anyways."

Still the boy smiled, then laughed with his eyes. As if he forgave Seana, but nothing would forgive what she did, said, and didn't say when she was as young as the mother the boy had now. That modern day Madonna had the look of a single Mom, a white band of flesh around her wedding finger with no ring on it.

Seana let her eyes rest upon the lad for the rest of the trip, but 125th Street had to happen sometime. The off-white mother took the very white child in her arms and waited for the door to open. Seana reached into her wallet and pulled out whatever money was in it. She stuck it into the woman's pocket.

"What the hell are you...?" she snarled.

"For the child, and you," Seana said. "Please?"

The young mother looked at the bills. More than Seana thought was in there. A week's pay by the counting of it. "Okay," she shrugged, offering a "Gracias" to Seana.

Sean waved goodbye as his mother walked him towards the clean stairs to the less than clean streets below. The train moved on to the 'rich folks' stop off Park Avenue, making its way into a dark tunnel en route.

By the time the train got to Grand Central Seana had braced herself to become Doctor Ryan again. Upon entering the Rest Room she promptly cleaned the blood from under her fingernails. They had grown since she had taken 'leave' from duty at work, and it was time to get medical again. As she filed them down she looked in the mirror and rechecked the messages on her Cell. Boris had not called. She tried calling him at home, a location which he never divulged, at work, and on his mobile. No answer, for the tenth time. But it was time to answer another message from an annoyance which plagued her ever since moved into her 'studio' in 'hip and cool' Manhattan..

"Rent due!!" the message from the land'lord' read. Two explanation marks this time. Two days to pay up or wind up on the streets, or sleeping on a slab next to the corpses. Acceptable lodgings back in St. John's Newfoundland for broke Residents at the hospital, but disallowed by some kind of law here in New York. Yet, she wanted to go back to the morgue. To work with simple deaths. Simple people who died of simple diseases or, failing that, simple altercations.

Then, as her brain adjusted to a life of quiet desperation, a not so simple Soul appeared in front of her just outside the Ladies Rest Room.

"Carlos?" she asked of the old woman in the baggy brown dress, noting a face under the wig that was unmistakable.

"Und my granddaughter," the Cuban Janitor replied with his best German accent. "Vladmira".

Seana thought she saw a ghost. The dying boy she remembered from the hospital room seemed to be transformed into a very alive girl. The hair that had fallen out out of his eyebrows replaced with pencil marks, the blonde wig making his blue eyes look bigger than life. Indeed the five year old child seemed very much alive with a big A. Gazing around the hubbub of the evening commuter traffic like it was a circus, and feeling him, or herself, the center of it.

"But I thought..." Seana asked 'Carlita'. "Therapy. What kind of therapy did you..."

"The medicines you wrote down on his chart, as 'notes', and which you wrote about in those research papers in the files at work that will be read by someone important one day, Doctor Ryan."

"Research speculations when I was a student."

"Which seem to be working right now," Carlos continued, pointing to the evidence of his findings. A walking, pointing and smiling child who was delivered from death's door.

“And later? There are some short term benefits I saw in the rats and, when I could find them, people, I treated with those herbs, but as for long term benefits...” Seana uttered in fright, noting that the transformation was too good to be true. A dying boy now a vibrant young girl.

“When Vladimir reaches puberty, maybe some psychotherapy. But for the moment, to avoid being killed by man made toxins or bullets...”

“---He has to be Vladimira,” Seana surmised.

“As you have to become Detective Ryan again, Doctor. My dear Seana.” Carlos smiled back with an elderly wisdom present in both genders.

Of all the questions Seana had brewing in her mind about the Roselli’s, the Minskovs and the city of innocent civilians who could come between them in their quest to kill each other, only one came to her tongue. “Boris. Is he alive?”

Carlos’ face turned solemn and profound. “In some ways yes, in some ways no.”

CHAPTER 14

“Pastafazule, alfredo al dante con carne, and spamoni, please,” the non-Italian gentleman smiled at the dark haired, olive skinned waiter in flawless Italian.

“Prego,” the waiter bowed back. “And for you other gentlemen?”

“The same all around Gino,” Giovanni Roselli replied, voicing the unspoken advise from the white-haired, wrinkled faced Marcello next to him, who seemed to tired to think, or speak given the world he was living in now.

“Is that because this Bolshevik Flatfoot ordered it in Italian, or because we’re trying to sell HIM something here?” hundred and twenty pound Big Tony ranted in a tough guy grumble filtered through a voicebox that registered in a tone that was boyish, and when he was drunk, female.

“What if I want ravioli?” Little Tony belted out of a belly large enough to imbibe three Big Tony’s with still enough room for a case of spamoni for dessert.

All eyes turned to Boris, their stare inescapable most particularly with the mirrors behind, in front and on every side of him. No doubt designed so that everyone in the room could see everyone else, perhaps a civilized way of doing business from what some said was the most civilized family of Mafia goons in the City.

JFK Jr. lookalike Vincent ‘don’t call me Vinny’ sat and watched most intensely, and discretely. The youngest mob boss and the only one who came to the table with a tie, though that garment of confinement seemed to liberate him somehow. He seemed very lawyerly, the kind who enjoyed the game more than who valued the result of fighting it.

“Gentlemen?” the waiter inquired. “Your order please.”

Boris stroked the prosthetic mustache he had sported so he could enter the establishment unrecognized and scratched the hairless temples above his very exposed ears. His military-cropped head felt cold, his brain under it exposed somehow. His secrets as to why he was there well hidden, so far. “I’ll have...ravioli then, please,” he said to the waiter. “Or whatever else these fine gentlemen are having.”

“Which is pastafazule, alfredo al dante, and spamoni,” Giovanni proclaimed. “All around,” he insisted, dismissing the waiter with a flick of his finger. The digit that moved millions of wears in illegal trade three years ago, now amounts well under the family’s quota, or needs.

“And without that frigin’ hippie oregano that Russian kid put in the sauce last Sunday!” Little Tony angrily asserted, grief underlying his rage for those who would have been sitting at the five empty chairs and place settings. “What was Russian fuck’s name?”

“Alexi.” Boris said calmly. “Alexi Minskov.”

“Who thought he could make us wacko with loco weed and fuck ourselves up,” Big Tony spouted out as he grabbed hold of a piece of brocholli, helping himself to a dip of the sauce in Boris’ antipasto plate. “Kid’s crap.”

“Or something one of us did ourselves?” Vincent offered. “Carmen spiking the sauce so her customers would eat more ravioli, or alfredo.” He turned to Boris. “We all here appreciate you keeping that out of the Police Report, and the Medical Report to the Health Code Inspector.”

“Doctor Ryan didn’t think it was relevant,” Boris replied.

“Until that crazy kunt comes to US for a favor, Detective Fedoroff?”

Boris bit his teeth as hard as he could while Vincent continued.

“You claim that this Doc is working for you after she was fired from her bosses for doing her job. You claim that you were outside in the alley when one of your fag Spic undercover chased him out of here. And now, you claim that the reason why we have four empty chairs at this table is because Minskov is poisoning each of us with raisons.”

“Ricin, not raisons.” Boris said, in as accentless English as he could. “Which represents one percent of dry volume of extract from a plant which anyone can get, and with simple lipid extraction technology and distillation with the right temperature gradients, can be made to order. Put into a man, or woman’s, food in amounts so small you can’t even see it, or taste it. Send him to the can with bloody vomiting and diahrea a day later, land him in the hospital with kidney, spleen and liver failure the next day. Toxify his blood so it eats away his body and tears apart his brain till he dies in confusion and pain four days after he feasts on...”

Boris made his point. The remaining bosses in the once great Roselli family put down their breadsticks, smelled the wine and looked at the four empty places at the table, grief, fear and anger holding their faces hostage. Giovanni seemed to be the most affected. Each of the fallen soldiers seemed to have been his own sons, though they were all nephews in one way or another. Strange emotions from a man who killed women who got in the way of mob business with as much ease as men, most notably a certain woman whose photo was found in each of the dead Roselli’s pockets at the time of their passing.

“Your dead comrade’s rotting gums were as yellow as Chinamen, their teeth falling out of the sockets and choking their throats,” Boris added to be sure the point was driven home.

“You forgot to mention the blood in the lungs they spit up,” Vincent said, calmly as he dipped his breadstick into everyone’s sauce, chewing on it with gustatory delight afterwards. “And, ‘EX’ Detective Fedoroff, there is one question that must be resolved before we continue this, what I assume to be, negotiation.”

“How to fight back...” Boris smiled. “Ricin would be the obvious method.”

“Which you know how to make, very well, I assume.”

“Yes,” Boris said, eyes downward, bolding another bite of brochalli. “I had some training as a forensic chemist.”

“With the FBI who wants us in jail?” Vincent shot back, then requested approval for his inquiry and line of questioning approved by everyone around the table, the final go ahead given by Giovanni’s finger. “Or the KGB who wants us dead.”

“The KGB doesn’t exist anymore, thank God,” Boris asserted.

“Just like we don’t exist anymore,” Vincent offered. “I tell my kids that all the time. Like I’m sure you tell someone you love, or loved, that the KGB is kaputnick, right Comrade?”

Vincent-don’t-call-me-Vinny’s remark hit Boris right between the eyes. How did he know that Boris had done everything he could to protect Vladimir from Russian mobsters who operated more freely than they had when they were Cops back in the Soviet Union? How did the Italian-American legal shark who violated every moral code known to humanity but never committed one illegal act in his adult life know about his ex-wife’s ‘accident’ at the

airport when she finally consented to come to America with their son who needed more medical help than was obtainable at any price in the New Russia?

“You and Minskov,” Vincent said in the manner of a skilled Slavic Secret Police Officer, leaning back with the kind of arrogance, confidence and cruelty which Boris’ father had in his prime. “There is something personal between you, yes?”

“Which is my personal business,” Boris spat out vengefully, drawing the line in the sand so that his innermost secrets would not get him and the people in his new life who he valued buried in the New Jersey Swamps. “Every man is entitled to his personal business. Me, you, and everyone around this table. Even...the ones who can’t answer for themselves.”

Boris’ instinct to refer to the departed Rosellis was just what Doctor Seana and Doctor Pragmatism ordered. The departed Rosellis had things about their past that were best buried with them. Police files and Mafia gossip recorded Frank Roselli’s exploits in after hours club as ‘Frankie’ along with indiscretions with men who were more macho than even Giovanni were to the eye. Vito had a wife who abused him on what seemed like PMS days that lasted 30 days a month. In his brief yet, to some, eventful twenty-five year old ‘life’, he had lied so much to his friends and enemies that he never knew when he was lying himself. The newspapers were never told about the dark side of these and the other heroes of the Roselli clan who, when called to duty for business, did more good for the family than harm at the end of the day, and life.

Giovanni cleared his throat. As the last and oldest remaining ‘Elder’ who was still living in the Real world, final say went to him, despite what his Uncle Marcello still may have wanted. “Mister Federoff. You want revenge on the Minskovs because of what they did to your wife and your son.”

“Because of what he did to MANY people’s wives and sons, Mister Roselli,” Boris’ reply, said from the heart and every thought in his tortured mind, hoping that the rage that made him say ‘he’ rather ‘they’ would go unnoticed. “The Minskovs owned the law back home, they own what used to be your streets here, and they will take over the country we both love very soon, unless we act NOW!”

“We put ricin crispies in their borch?” Big Tony mused with a joke he thought was funny coming up his throat, but once delivered, wasn’t. Tears came down the Wise Guy’s face. Then, in ways of their own, every one of the Rosellis allowed grief to re-enter their hardened hearts.

Sensing the time was right, Boris laid out his plan. “I have tapes of Alexi talking to his homeys in the hood after he left my interrogation room. I have suspicions that my bosses get more money from Alexi’s father Ivan than they get from the City Treasury. I have ideas about where their main ricin factory is. And I have ways to make them suffer more than any of our...your...fallen comrades did, Comrades. Meet my friends...”

With that, Boris took out cards with chemical formulas on them and names which perhaps would be recognised, and some which wouldn’t. He passing them around the room. “Meet our new associates. Serin, Organophosphate. Thallium. Stricynine. IDPN. Anthrax. Mad Cow Virus. And some names that no FBI, CIA or even SAG screenwriter in this country knows about. All delivering slow and painful deaths. The symptoms are listed. All leading to paralysis of every muscle in the body, one way or another. With a mind that can experience every minute of agony for the rest of their miserable pathetic lives.”

Smiles of impression and satisfaction spread around the table like a big joint at a Rock Festival, until it was stopped by the legal arm of the Family-Serving Law.

“And if any of these friends of yours come back to wack us, or OUR families?” Vincent asked.

“Turn around the cards, please,” Boris answered. “Cures which, in the event, you can use to protect your friends, or, if you need to, sell to your enemies, who you can make slaves. Give them the disease, sell them the cure, own their asses for life. Any country with any brains has such plans on their drawing board. None of them has had the balls to use them, so the papers say anyway ”

“I am impressed,” Giovanni said, voicing the opinions of everyone in the room. “But confused. Why are you giving these to us? As they say in Hollywood, what is your motivation?”

“Family,” Boris replied, with all sincerity, for still-secret reasons he had not shared with any audience, and hoped he never had to.

CHAPTER 15

Carlos hated Italian cuisine, but someone else was buying. “Spanish food without the spices,” he commented after the first bite into the ‘hot and zesty’ calzone at the Little Italy festival. “Like an ocean without water. A woman without a ----“

“---I get what you are talking about, already,” Father Rabinowitz interjected as he bid ‘shaloms’ to his Gentile neighbors, ‘mazeltovs’ to the parishioners who came to the street fair with new babies, babes or boyfriends..

The Sunday Afternoon air reeked of festive gustatory aromas, most of which were accompanied by deep fried grease. Vladmir wanted to come, even if was as Vladmira, but ‘Mama Carlos’ would not let him. Better that the lad stay with the Old German Professor and learn about making cookoo clocks than being in the middle of a festival that was funded, one way or another, by the Roselli’s.

“A lower budget affair than in previous years,” Father “R” noted as his nose sniffed smells which belonged ten blocks away, ten thousand miles further according to the ‘America for Americans’ contingent of his Parish. As he approached the booths new to the festival, the source of the odors became obvious to the eye, ear and tongue. “More pizza slices with Hawaiian Pineapple than pepperoni. Sushi meat balls. Chinese eggrolls. And Russian blintzes...”

“I think they are called perogies, Father R.,” Carlos said as brought some of the free samples up to his mouth, pretended to eat it, and snuck it into a plastic bag. Doing the same with the five other booths of Russian food.

“You have another mouth to feed at home, Carlos?” Rabinowitz inquired.

Carlos froze. A man of God, the Catholic one and the Jewish one, maybe the Real One as well, was asking him a direct question. To lie to a priest, such was a sin. To lie to a friend, a far more offensive act.

“There is something you want to tell me?” the People’s Choice Priest asked.

“Yes, but not here.” Carlos’ reply. He looked around, noting noses in the crowd resembling the Minskov schnoz, faces that seemed more Rosellian than Italian. And a whole lot of people in the middle whose faces seemed as happy as they were uninformed about what was really cooking on the streets.

The cubical seemed darker than usual. Cold and claustrophobic as well, the wood reeking of dirt, fresh paint and worms behind it. Carlos chocked with every breath he tried to take in.

“It is a confessional, not a coffin, my son,” Father R assured Carlos from the other side of the curtain. “You can talk, my son, if---“

“---If you stop calling me ‘son’, Isaac!” Carlos screamed out. “You too!” he repeated, looking up to the sky.

“We’re both listening, when you are ready to talk,” Isaac said as man, priest and representative of the Divinity Carlos denied and feared for most of his adult life.

“You first, Isaac!” Carlos said. “You talk about what you did wrong, then I’ll talk about what...I am about to do which is wrong.”

“I see,” Father Rabinowitz said in a voice that sounded ‘shinkish’, made all the more real by smoke emerging from the other side of the partition.

“Is that cherry pipe tobacco?”

“And if it is, Carlos?”

“I’d say you wanted to know more about what’s in my head than in my heart, Doctor Isaac.”

“And if I do?”

“I’d still ask you about the woman who you keep not talking about every time we----“

“---She was part of my past, Carlos,” the good Father confessed in a voice that felt tight with sorrow, and fueled by anger. “I loved her. Life took her away from me. I did what I had to do to move on. And to make everything right.”

“Was she...hot, Father Issac?”

“Beautiful, Rabbi Carlos.”

“Do you still have picture of her? I mean between your ears, in your----”. Before Carlos could continue, a picture was pushed under the partition. Faded with what looked like tears, but the essence of the picture still evident. Young, blonde and... “She looks...familiar, Isaac,” Carlos smiled.

“They all do, Carlos,” the reply. “Now, give me back my picture.”

Carlos complied, then sat back and looked at the bags of Russian delights in the baggies he had collected at the festival.

“Your turn now.” Father R insisted. “You are about to do something very wrong. What is her name, my son?”

Carlos remained silent, the thoughts about the War he was helping Boris to unleash between Russian vermin and Italian scum troubling his mind.

“Or his name, my good friend?” Issac continued.

Carlos found his lips turn upward below his two day old beard.

“Is the name of this co-sinner of yours, me?” the Good Father continued. “If it is, I am flattered, but as for a sexual expression of the freindship between us---“

“---If you could make Stalin fight Hitler in a fight which would kill them both, would you do so?” Carlos proposed.

“What kind of fight, Carlos?”

“One where soldiers would be killed, Father.”

From Father Rabinowitz, silence.

“Nazis and Bolsheviks, two kinds of people who kill Jews, Isaac,” Carlos explained.

“It would be a just war, if no civilians were killed,” Father Rabinowitz replied in Rabinical tone.

“A necessary one if some civilians were wounded, injured, or accidently paralyzed and poisoned?” Carlos asked as his mind projected the outcome from the biological warfare between the Russian and Italian mob that was about to hit the streets. A War that could, if fought effectively, wipe out most of the organized crime in Brooklyn, with those remaining afterwards brought to justice according to the law of the people, rather than the codes of the

criminals. A War that if not steered right AND effectively by a Russian renegade Cop, his Greek partner, a Newfy Doctor and an aging Cuban janitor, could depopulate the City faster than escalating real estate prices.

“I think you should tell me more about this, Carlos,” Father Rabinowitz said, pushing the partition away. “Man to man.”

“Sinner to Priest, Father.” Carlos insisted. “Your ears only.”

Rabinowitz seemed to contemplate the matter. No ‘yes’ meant a possible ‘no’. Carlos got up and prepared to leave when he felt a tug on his coat.

“You forgot these,” Rabinowitz said of the baggies of food. One of them fell to the ground. Rabinowitz dipped his finger into it.

“NO!” Carlos screamed as he grabbed his closest friend’s wrist.

“You will tell me why, please?” Rabinowitz’s reply.

Carlos looked around him once again. Checking for microphones, looking for radio transmitters, and noting Little Tony and Big Tony taking a seat in the back row. They knelt, then walked to another confessional booth.

“Do you want me to let them go first?” Rabinowitz asked.

“No...Fuck them!” Carlos said, pulling Father R back into the booth.

The Roselli’s went on their way, replying to the voices on their cell phones instead of the Voice of whatever Divinity was inside of their parmasian-filled guts and grease-artery hearts. Carlos talked to Isaac for the next two hours over a glass of the Sacramental wine---Manichevitz kosher, vintage 1988. He revealing everything about what he knew or thought he knew about what was going on, starting with the first time he met Seana Ryan. It seemed like a logical place to start. As to where it ended, it felt like exhaustion, and relief.

“So, you won’t tell anyone?”

“About you wearing a dress in Grand Central Station and waiting outside the Ladies Room?” Rabinowitz smiled back.

“I want to take communion, Father.” Carlos said. “Right here. Right now!”

“You aren’t going to kill yourself, are you? Or do something that will get yourself killed by someone else?”

“I will do what I have to do. You do what you have to do.” Carlos went to the kneeling stand by the alter. He found himself praying for forgiveness. Forgiveness for doing the right and necessary thing. Abandoning the Mission spearheaded by Boris would be a sin of omission. Going along with it could be a sin of righteousness.

Rabinowitz went behind the curtains and emerged with a single communion wafer. It felt tingly on Carlos’ tongue, though tasteless. A vibration of rejuvenation and forgiveness that tingled down his spine and into every fiber of his shaking and as he now felt it, rapidly aging body. “Forgive me, Father in Heaven, for the sin I do in your service,” he repeated again and again, till he found himself in the church all alone, but with an imaginary friend who seemed very Real. “Does this mean we’re friends again?” he said to the sky beyond the Cistine Chapel imitation painting on the Church roof. The answer ‘yes’ seemed to come down into him by way of reply.

CHAPTER 16

The Old German was too distraught to work that day, a death in the family according to the twenty-something woman who took care of his medical, human and manly needs. Carlos was late, so it was up to Seana and Boris to sort out what the Latino Undercover Mench had gathered from the Russian booths at the Sunday Street Festivals.

“No ricin in here,” Seana concluded after making the third confirmatory run. “And not in any other the flowers or cakes delivered from Minskov’s shops to any of the Rosellis’ restaurants or strip joints.”

“Check again,” Boris insisted. “I smelled castor oil in the flower shop, and in the Ukrainian Bakery next store.”

“But you didn’t see a lab there, or---“

“---Check it again, goddamn you!” the dreamboat Russian screamed out as Seana felt herself pushed into the wall of the garage, then into a picture of the Old Professor with someone she recognized from someplace very recently.

“Tasha?” she gasped. “The nurse at the hospital.”

“And the Professor’s daughter,” Boris grunted out while catching his breath, and perspective. “I was going to tell you, but...”

“...It was irrelevant?” Seana replied. “Like these fake antidotes for these very real toxins you said you, and I, would make for the Roselli’s?” She threw the tomato sauce stained hand drawn cards of biological weaponry which Boris brought back from the Roselli’s eatery back into his face.

“They believe that they will work, and that we will make them. Battle is Deception. ‘The Art of War’, Seana.”

“And, Detective, those who live by the sword, or biological lie will die by it...along with a whole lot of innocent people---“

“---Only if we are careless about the way we pit these scum against each other.”

“And if we become scum ourselves?” Seana challenged with arms folded. “And unemployed scum! You may be able to make a living without a legitamate job, but I can’t! And won’t!”

Boris laughed like a madman.

“What, I said something funny?” Seana sneared.

“You said something...irrelevant,” the reply from the depths of madness. “‘Legitamate job’. There is no such thing. We are all slimy merchants or leacherous horsetheieves.”

“I have...and if I don’t get back there in an hour HAD...a government job!”

“Governments are the worst kind of criminals, Doctor Ryan. From taking our tax dollars and investing them into offshore accounts which are illegal for us to put our money into to killing innocent people in other countries as an excuse for the citizens of their countries to become rich, powerful and comfortable. To...” Boris stopped in mid rant. Something very personal wacked him straight into the base of his spine and Soul as he looked at himself in the mirror.

“...To what?” Seana inquired of the once-wavey-haired jeans and sport jacket detective who was now clad in a coat that seemed very military and Slavic, matching his buzz cut which he had trimmed down even more during the bathroom break two analysis samples ago. “To what, Boris who is NOT his father’s son unless he wants to be,” she advanced.

“He was a brave man, in his own way,” Fedoroff Junior said. “Intelligent, to.”

“Kind to his family, at the expense of other people’s families?” Doctor Ryan continued.

Tears streamed down Boris’ face. Seana opened her arms, took a careful step towards him, then was pushed away.

“I’m fine....I have to be fine. We have a...”

“You were the one who turned him in?” Seana asked.

“You are telling me, or asking me?” Boris replied after a taking deep breath, sucking up the pain back into his gut.

“Whichever you chose, Detective Fedoroff.”

“You would have made a good lawyer, Doctor Ryan.”

“Except for the fact that the law has very little to do with justice, on both sides of the Iron Curtain.”

Boris thumbed through the reems of chemical analysis again. “Minskov knows more about ricin production than any man alive.”

“And almost as much as your father did?” Seana proposed. “His former partner?” she advanced.

Boris replied with something in Russian. It sounded kind.

“What was that?”

“It means that when someone is too good at guessing the right answers, the final answer will be his, or her own downfall.”

“OUR downfall...” Seana advanced.

For reasons she could not determine or define, Seana felt close to Boris. Closer than ever. Closer than anyone she had met in her thus far relatively sheltered life. She felt scared, not knowing where she was on the planet, but somehow Alive, with a big A. A quezy feeling in her stomach meant that there was fire in her belly. The expression made sense, the discomfort welcomed as a great joy, till the phone rang.

Boris picked it up. “Papa,” Vladimir answered, followed by something in Russian.

“I told you not to call me that!” he said in English, then yelled in Russian. “English!” he commanded.

“Carlos!” Vladimir continued. “He dying...” the reply, in English. “Come fast.”

CHAPTER 17

Carlos opened his eyes slowly. He wondered why everything felt so ‘light’ around him. Why the noises seemed so intense, the conversation so muffled, the feel of the air so ‘sharp’. And the reason why there were bloody fetuses between his legs, merged together into a mess of ‘glob’. “Are those my...”

“Intestines, yes,” Boris answered with a voice that seemed calmer than all the others around the hospital room around his blood and urine-soaked bed..

“And out of my goddamn---” Carlos continued till he felt blood oozing out of his stomach and up his throat as the words came from the anti-Pope and anti-Castro Cuban’s mouth. He dared not look at what came out onto the bedsheets of coming from his mouth. But he couldn’t ignore the sight of his own hands. Yellow, cold and shaking.

“What day is it?” he found himself trying to bring to voice.

“Friday,” a boy in the hall seemed to say. “Good Friday,” he repeated with an angelic voice spoken through his eyes rather than his mouth. The lad seemed to be happy, yet sombre, his face resembling one he had known a long time ago.

“Was I...you?” Carlos inquired of the light-shrouded lad, whose presence was not noticed by two Military men who stormed into the room, demanding that Seana give him his chart.

“What you could have been, or made,” the boy smiled back to Carlos, speaking from his mind rather than mouth. “Father, Dad, Pop.”

“Yes,” the eighty-something bachelor nodded. “I would have liked to have you as a son.”

“And I needed to have you as a father, but...” The boy looked around the room at the women coming out of the clinic fertility clinic door. Four attractive blonde women, one redhead who seemed crazy behind the eyes, and a plain black haired teenager who seemed wise beyond her years that caught his attention. “It’s about time for a Soul to enter her womb so it can come back into the world. Maybe it could be me. What do you think about her being my new, Pop?”

“I’m not your father, but...if I were,” Carlos replied through the silent speech which felt very loud, and assuring as he looked at the plain-Jane woman who seemed like she would be an exceptional mother. “She seems like she will be a good mother. Maybe even a kind wife. At least an understanding one, to the extent that a woman can understand a man., my...” Carlos couldn’t even think the word ‘son’, regrets of not having a son, or daughter, to pass on his wisdom and madness to came back. The boy of Light disappeared into the womb of the ordinary brown haired mother. The voices of the world still not left became louder.

Carlos’ fading vision became fixed on Seana as she grabbed his chart, then said something to the military men, turning one into a coward who ran out of the room, the other into an angry tyrant vowing revenge when he returned.

Boris read the findings to her. “Jaundice, spleen breakdown, kidney failure, two days after bloody diarrhea and vomiting.” A “New strain of Leptosporosis in something he ate” Boris wrote down on the chart forging her writing with expert penmanship. Seana gathered what was left of his intestines, easily accessible on the bedsheet.

“Ricin,” she whispered to Boris. “I know that’s what killed him.”

“Exposed five days ago.” the Russian pillar of cynicism offered. “Like he was the unlucky diner at the Roselli table and ate the wrong plate of ravioli. Who died, or is about to die on Good Friday.”

The tissue around Carlos’ tongue finally gave way, portions of that most favorite appendage falling out of his mouth. He banged on the rail of the hospital bed. He desperately wanted to tell his friends that his sense of hearing was better than ever. That he knew something about his death that could save their lives, and perhaps millions of others. And that this ‘something’ could only be revealed if he could join them in a final discourse, discussion or primal scream.

The room turned bright. Perhaps because someone opened the blinds, or maybe because another kind of Light found its way into the room and what was the final scene in Carlos’ life opera. “The show isn’t over till the old fuck farts!” he screamed with his fist at the Creator who he served, cursed and loved, sometimes all at once. “I went to Confession, after many, many years!” he said with the voice still inside his eyes. “See!” Carlos grabbed hold of rosary beads next to him, then put something together. Hearing the death rattle in his own lungs, he knew there was one action left. But before he could take it, a hand came into the room. Attached to a black sleeve, attached to a man who spoke an ancient and forgotten tongue.

“Carlos?” the black-clothed man said. “It’s your friend.”

It sounded like Latin. The language Carlos remembered from his youth. The language that made Mass sound Real, and Trustable, so long ago. From the voice of someone whose People were around long before the time of Jesus. The last face Carlos looked into before facing his own on the Other Side.

CHAPTER 18

Father Rabinowitz, the last man Carlos saw and the only one he really trusted, rose up at the gravesite to deliver the eulogy at the finally-dead ex-Cuban Real Revolutionary's funeral. Seana insisted that the 'G' word was not included. Boris made certain that the body being put into the ground was someone else's, and that Vladimir was safely with the Old German and his Mistress in a location known only to him and Jimmy Pappas.

The name on the tombstone read "Carlos: Man amongst Mice". The eulogy over the grave was in English, Spanish and finally Yiddish. No one except the ghosts in the other graves could understand Rabinowitz's mournful prayers which he offered the Creator on behalf of a man who was created to deny, defy and question Him. A dirty job, but someone had to do it in the Divine Plan of things.

Raboniwitz seemed to be in a world of his own, a private kind of pain which he had to work out in his own time, and language.

“Carlos had a sharp tongue, Boris,” Seana whispered to the only other mourner at the gravesite as she extended her shaking hand towards his. “Which came off only at the very end.”

“Which I saved. And MY, not your, laboratory contacts revealed to have ricin in it. With specs of sawdust and rice flour he ate, by the most crude estimation, four days ago, Doctor Ryan,” Boris’ terse reply, pushing her and away, answering Seana’s plea for an explanation with the turn of his back.

“Oh, so it’s Doctor Ryan, now, Detective? I thought we were past all of that.” She felt hurt, and alone. The gentle morning breeze felt like a blast of cold winter wind blowing though her black skirt into the womb which still lay empty. “You are a cold man, Detective Fedoroff.”

“When you become a cold woman, you will become a more effective Doctor,” the reply.

The answer hit Seana between the eyes, and in places within her past that came to life again. The S and M relationships she had with her bosses at work back in Manhattan which worked so well if she allowed herself to feel humiliated and let them feel important. The times in medical school when she allowed herself to warm up to patients instead of studying their diseases, coming in at the end of the semester with a grade point average that nearly flunked her out of the training program. The dances back in Newfoundland where getting a man was about manipulating his mind more than understanding his Soul. And the love of the boy, and Soul, that crippled her ability to love any man, even the one next to her right now. Even now her love for Boris was still more intense than any hatred she ever felt for herself.

A gravedigger, whose face turned out to belong to Jimmy Pappas, approached the gravesite and whispered something to Boris. Three green sedans drove into the cemetery, sun-glassed mourners in black suits working their way up to Carlos’ grave. Boris gently pulled Seana’s hand away from the tombstone, escorting her to the car, slowly and discretely.

As soon as Seana’s hips hit the imitation leather seats in the decade old Cadillac the doors locked around her. Police cars swarmed in behind them, out of view. Rabinowitz continued praying, in yet another language, while the body under the ground was being taken away by the men in black.

“Those men...They look familiar,” Seana commented.

“We all do, babe,” Jimmy mused from the driver’s seat from under a limo driver’s hat he donned for the occasion with a ‘who loves ya’ Kojak wink that felt cheezy, romantic and real. Part Arab sheik, part European Prince and part American Dutch Uncle, in keeping with his Greek ancestry. Though Jimmy Pappas was clad himself as a Commoner, he seemed very uncommon. He seemed to be a liar, just like everyone else, but an honest liar. An outlaw who ultimately served some kind of law. As everyone had to serve something. As logic served intuition. And as intuition served Truth. And as persistence served discovery in Seana’s Fire-driven mind when trying to figure out the ‘what’s’ behind the ‘who’ that continued to prayed over the John Doe body the Men in Black seemed to buy as Carlos’.

“Father Rabinowitz,” she noted. “Strange name.”

“Ways of the world. Jews for Jesus, Christian Buddhists, Religious Atheists,” Jimmy shot back affectionately. “And Bolshevik Capitalists, my lovely Comradski”.

Boris seemed insulted and jealous. But such seemed to be secondary to a new obsession in Seana’s mind. “How did Father Rabinowitz know where Carlos was?”

“Because they talk, Doctor Ryan.” Boris commented with a distanced arrogance which he used to keep himself safe, and according to him, effective. “They are, or were....friends.”

“The kind of friend who just happened to know the time when Carlos would be dying?” Jimmy offered seconds before Seana was able to voice it from her own mouth.

Boris' face froze. Jimmy stopped the car. Seana looked behind her, noting a shovel, cossack and collar at the gravesite as a man with a strained back clad in a workman's hobbled down the hill of the cemetery, disappearing into the foggy mist which was creeping over the tombstone covered green lawn, turning everything a cold, clammy Newfoundland grey.

CHAPTER 19

Seargent Jimmy Pappas stopped dead in his tracks at the door of Saint Anne's Church, struck into a rigid stand by the very Catholic crucifix over the door. "I can't go in there, guys," he said to Boris and Seana as they walked up the steps. "I'm...Greek Orthodox. I'm..."

"Allowed to do business with Italian Mobsters but forbidden from entering their Churches, because the Pope in Rome and the Arch Bishop in Greece hate each other more than the New York Giants and the Washington Redskins?" Seana shot back with a New York arrogance amplified by a Russian-like a ego, something Boris hoped she would have the good sense not to acquire, or use..

"My mother. I made her a promise. Greek Orthodox...we're not supposed to even step foot in a Catholic Church."

"And Russian Orthodox can, and DO!" Boris grunted back.

"Boris. Seana. It's a Greek thing, ya know?" the veteran Greek American Cop said with a boyish fear that reeked of ignorance, and a strange brand of guilt, or perhaps a fear based in something very real.

The street lights shone their light upon the faces of the Saints, and Sinners, carved into the archway, making all of them look like vicious guard dogs. Even the eyes of the Virgin Mary seemed to be more like a wolf bitch protecting her baby than a loving mother inviting the poor, infirmed and hurting into her cave. Something that the original carvers put in so that the faces would smile when hit by gentle sunlight, snarl when seen as dark shadows amidst bright light when shone upon by the moon, streetlights, or torches held by hungry looters who sought to raid the poor box at night.

Seana seemed to be made more determined by the demon-like faces on the guardians of God's house. She became most angry when gazing upon the Virgin Mary from her now-not virgin perspective. The sight of a content child with a proficient and protective mother carved with smooth strokes from hard stone imprinted an angry envy into her Soul.

Meanwhile, the light from the basement flickered on and off, a Priest wearing a ski cap that could double as a yormaka staring directly into it. By the sounds of it, laughter coming from its godlike source. "Conan.," Boris said to his allies, and perhaps Comrades, by way of explanation after surmising that the life-defeated man in the oversized Salvation Army easy chair was Father Rabinowitz.. He seemed tired, the louder the light-emitting icon in front of the good Father became, the more its 'worshipper' slipped into a slumber, and within a few beats was responding the the 21st Century Sermon from the Mounted Hollywood Star with a snore that could be heard two blocks away.

"Late Night with Conan O'Brien," Jimmy smiled as he watched the Master of Late Night, now protector of Late, Late Night, doing 'tandem yoga' with a scantily clad Madonna. "Another year, another religious conversion," the many-woman but apparently still one-religion veteran of the New York streets and Jersey back alleys slurred out with a Tony Soprano shrug.

"If he wakes up, you get us!" Boris commanded his superiorly ranked partner, who now seemed more like a caught crook than a Cop. Guilty of the worst and most committed offense for a man in his Calling and profession---fear.

Seargent Pappas nodded in the affirmative, hiding his face and his mind. As Boris felt it, Jimmy was now dumb, terrified, or marginally useless. And as he saw it, Seana was becoming too good for her own good. In no time flat she found a way to open the lock on Cathedral door with the bobby pin from her still-uncut hair and sweat-soaked.

"Hmm...That was easy," she said without having to even take out her wire cutters, checking to see that all of her medical baggies and mini-containers were still in the pockets where she had put them. "Yeah...that was real easy," she smiled proudly as she prepared to walk in to examine what was really being cooked up in the Church kitchen.

"Maybe too easy." Boris noted that the lock had been opened already. Something in him said 'stop' but Seana, was all 'go'. Before he could warn her with an ancient Russian proverb, or a recent New York fact, she was inside the door. A blue and white turned the corner to the North, another one coming in from the South. They approached slowly, then stopped. A green sedan came in from an alley and parked in between them. Seana walked, then marched to the alter, where Seana looked like she was having an argument with God. Something Boris had done himself after he had completed his first year of KGB-funded University training, after his mother was killed in a fire at home while his father was at work, and in a final one-way rant after his wife was killed in that traffic accident in front of a Russian book store in Flatbush.

A fat-and-skinny White team exited the Blue and White on the North end of the street, waking up the dude at the all night donut shop for a dozen coconut glazed and two coffees. Louise Suzuki, a Japanese Patrolperson with fresh Seargent stripes exited the vehicle at the other end of the street. She stroked her recently shorn head which was part of the job as it pertained to a PBA-sponsored benefit to raise money for kids with Cancer, or, as Jimmy Pappas claimed, a gesture of solidarity for her lesbian roommate in Queens. Meanwhile, Pappas was gone, his walky talky on the street, seconds away from being crushed by an oncoming garbage truck.

It was the people in the Green Sedan that worried Boris most. The color was inoffensively 'government', the plates hidden by shadows and manner in which the driver had parked the vehicle. Diplomatic plates, perhaps, the

inhabitants with metallic flags on their lapels, something only Americans did, and only did in their own country. And for 'good luck', a Russian Orthodox cross hanging on the rear view mirror.

Seana's rant to God about being punished for protecting the God loving-boy, then God-fearing man, who got her pregnant then asked if she could get an abortion to save family honor and virtue got louder, and more personal. As the latter was something that got you killed in law enforcement, and ineffective in biomedical forensic investigations, the time was now. Boris entered Rabinowitz's house of 'whatever' and closed the door behind him, bolting it shut from the inside.

Someone had put music on. "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" from Bach, played with a steady beat on the organ, an inoffensively offensive tone which would have made the composer turn over in his grave and, as Boris imagined possible on more than one occasion, make Jesus come back from wherever he was to personally show musicians how devotional music must be played. Seana's discussion with God seemed to have more of the kind of vocabulary you would hear between Newfys fighting it out on in hockey game or at the bar afterwards than a place of reflection, meditation and, on a good day, wisdom.

"We both know He doesn't exist," Boris interjected, looking up to the roof with whatever hope he still had left in his life-tested Soul. Having silenced her rage with a shocking juxtaposed truth, he looked around the altar, stepping carefully upon the carpet leading up to it, his hand trembling as he moved the velvet red tablecloth aside, confirming that the smell of burning flesh from below it was residual incense. "God is the only imaginary friend we're allowed, you know. In this country, you are allowed, and encouraged, to have such an imaginary friend. In my country...me, my father, and so many sons and fathers were told that belief in this imaginary friend, or in most Russian cases sadistic Master, was an epidemic psychiatric illness that perhaps one day neuroscientists could understand, or cure, or---" Boris froze. Something behind the curtain that the cockroaches visible to his eye were running away from, or the mice he could were running towards. Confirmed by a movement of the curtain, a cold burst of wind from the all-night pizzeria in the alley, the odor of fresh dough and re-fried grease mixed with an aroma that brought everything back to earth.

"...Caster oil," Boris and Seana whispered, in unison. The wind behind the curtain that no one except Father Rabinowitz, an Alter Boy perhaps, or maybe an underpaid all-night cleaner ever crossed ceased as abruptly as it started.

"Wear a mask on your face when you play hockey. Your nose it will let you see what is coming before your enemies can see you," Boris whispered to Seana, remembering the chats he had with his father in the good times, and the final times on the deathbed at the Post-Glasnost prison hospital where the once-high-ranking KGB Protector of the People's Collective died a lonely, and agonizing death. A death which which the Old Guard bastard and black market profiteer deserved. A death which killed something in Boris as well.

"You did what you had to do," Seana said, reading the ex-Bolshevik's mind, remembering details he had not revealed to her, or at least which he didn't think he did. "Your father was a Cop who became a criminal. You were a man who became a Cop."

"And the favorite son of my 'Godfather', Ivan Minskov, is a handful of votes away from being elected District Attorney of this City, then this Country, and then YOUR Country, Canada...the fifty-first State, Comrade Ryan." Boris whispered while sniffing around the curtain, the narrow corridors around it and the vents to locate the source of the ricin byproduct or the sweat of the 'legally invisible' laboratory staff who seemed to be making it.

"Canada is an independent country," Seana boasted as she spotted specs of what looked like rice wafers, around one dead mouse, another with an ass more blood than flesh in a death shake. With the squeeze of fingers protected by a double layer of sterile gloves, she ended the animal's suffering with a tragically 'professional' emotional anesthesia to the animal's suffering as well as the method of execution. "We Canadians are a happy and free people," she said.

"Happy and free...like Howard Stern and Rush Limbough. Impossible to be both," the too-wise-before his time 30-something Detective said as he located another kind of odor, close by, but not anywhere he could locate in the backroom 1950's hallway that was connected to a multi-vent 1850's labyrinth of musty brick tunnels which seemed

impassable only to 32 inch waist humans, or ghosts. “I smell fear here...Fear-soaked sweat, maybe feces, maybe urine, but mostly fear-soaked sweat.”

“White Noise,” the terrified Doctor Seana said with as much certainty as any scientific fact. She led Boris through a narrow uncleaned weaving corridor looked after by spiders whose webs seemed to be stationed every three feet. “Talking from dead people that you never talk about to the shrinks.”

“Or when you are not on your medication?” Boris smiled, his olfactory senses confirming that what Seana was hearing in her head was what he was seeing with his nose. “Are you on your medication, Seana?”

“Gave it up for Lent,” her reply, delivered as she turned the corner around a painting of Jesus on the cross that made the Savior look more like a sadistic executioner than a loving sacrificial lamb.

On the other side of the spider webbed brick underground passage was a wall which contained rotting wood, carcasses of rats under it next to a box of wafers that looked painfully familiar.

“Communion cookies,” she noted. “Like the kind I ate when I...”

Something in Seana froze. As Boris said, and felt it, the sub-audible White Noise was now screaming to her very loud black and white. It seemed like the eyes on all the paintings and frescos were speaking to her now, forcing the conversation, and confession, out of her. And from her direction with the kind of intensity that even the beer drinking Jimmy Pappas could smell with a stuffed nose and headcold...fear-soaked sweat. It got stronger, catapulting Seana into the kind of tremor that led to terror, the kind of terror that led to paralysis of the mind, the kind of paralysis that mental patients, political prisoners, criminals, key witnesses and friends never recovered from in Boris’ painful experiences.

“What happened?” Boris said, going against his instincts of letting grieving people have their space. He took hold of her skaking hand, absorbing her fear and grief. Hopefully not being pulled into the helplessness of it himself. “That boy?” he inquired as a criminal scientists. “That man?” he asked as a friend. “That...bastard, motherfucking bastard who!!!” he pressed as a ‘your enemy is my enemy too’ ally which was more ineffective than a friend, but a useful tool to use as long as you didn’t get pulled into it.

Contrary to logic, and the more cerebral aspect of his inquiry, Boris saw something give way in Seana. The interrogatee who he needed as a co-investigator, and a friend, breathed more slowly, more deeply, and seemed to think more sanely.

“If I was there, I would have killed the mother fucker. The piece of shit. The garbage piece of crap. Torn off his balls, and fed them to---“

Boris felt the breath taken out of his lungs by the hand of fate, or more accurately, the fist of his ‘patient’, tightly around his neck while his back was scraped against the moldly brick wall.

“No one hurts my brother!” Seana ranted with a high pitched voice that came from the nightmare in her past. Her body of the thirty-something woman transformed into that of a teenaged girl, from the lowering of her shoulders, wiggle in her torso and inversion of her feet, toes together, shaking angles separated from each other. “I won’t tell on my brother! He didn’t mean it.”

“He didn’t mean what, Seana?” Boris asked as a father, the best he knew how to be anyway.

“My brother. He didn’t mean to...He didn’t mean to...” Seana’s beet-red angry face gave way to stone cold numb, and hard.

“Didn’t mean to do what, Seana?” Boris gently asked. “This?” The gamble had to be taken. With his right hand he gently caressed Seana’s ear lobe, then gently moved it towards her chin. Her eyes swelled, but her shaking jaw remained silent.

“And didn’t mean to do this, Seana?” Detective Fedoroff edged his left hand under Seana’s skirt, moving up her legs, gently working her way up into her crotch and the key to her innermost secret. It was necessary for the process at hand. And, as long as Boris could prevent himself from becoming his sadistic father’s son, it could be effective for the purpose at hand. Particularly now, when Boris himself could hear, or perhaps feel, the White Noise from behind the rotted wood and degenerating brick tunnel walls. The Mission of saving the Collective by finding out who was making Ricin and why, as well as saving Seana from her own demons were the same now. The kind of Moment that every Real Revolutionary lived and prayed for but few ever really got. “Did he do...this?” Boris said, as he fingered her rock hard clitoris in the attempt to open her mouth, hoping he would not have to invoke more of the memory.. “Did your brother do...this?” the evitable move which pushed Boris’ finger though the hole which had not been entered for what seemed like twenty years, the penetration occurring perhaps because of Seana’s shaking, perhaps because of Boris’ father’s genes in his fingertips, or perhaps because they both were startled by the voice of a very real blue collar Brooklyn man behind the South Wall saying “Bless me Father, for I have sinned”.

“My brother’s special, Officer Brady. Slow in the head is all.. He got into Daddy’s rum. First time, I think, I know....If they find out what he did, they’ll put him away in the nuthouse.” Seana confessed to Boris, or the Priest she seemed to feel inside of him. “He didn’ rape me...He couldn’t have. He didn’t. Really.” Seana pleaded her case to the frescos on the wall, her hands hiding a stomach she made bigger with deep, committed, and collected breaths. “Mom, Dad. I have to go away. To Europe. For Nine months or so...” Then, the ‘baby’ inside of her belly had it’s say. “I’m sorry, my baby...my child.” she sobbed to it. “You have bad genes. A bad mother. And a father who...who is...”

“In the hospital, Seana?” Boris offered.

“In heaven now....” Seana grunted. “He didn’t kill himself.” Abruptly, she gritted her teeth at a crucifix with ‘the Man’ on it. “You could have saved him! He’s NOT going to hell because he didn’t save him! You bastard! You sadistic fuck! No one is going to send MY brother to Hell!’ No one is going to send...to send...”

“To send who, Seana?”

“My brother, you Fuck!”

“My brother who is...” Boris found come out of his mouth followed by a key which came from wha seemed like a Divine or at least a benevolent place. “What’s his name?”

“John. Johnny..Johnboy...No, JohnMAN. No...John. John. John....”

“Giovanni?” an echoing voice repeated from the other side of the walls, loud and clear, from Father Rabinowitz. It was sufficiently loud to wake Seana from her nightmare. She pointed to its source with a firm, but still shaking hand.

Boris helped himself to a look into the secluded room from which the echo of the Italianization of Seana’s brother’s name, a few made possible by Seana having thrown her against the wall. “When God loves you He sends demons your way, as Nikos Katzanzakis said. And when God is about to punish you, He sends coincidences your way as well.”

“And the pessimist who said that?” Seana shot back.

“My wife,” the terse reply as Boris heard two cars come into what was usually a deserted street at 1:30 AM, except for the neandering homeless packs of unfortunates that according to the City’s morning newspapers, didn’t exist anymore. “My son’s mother. Who was killed by a coincidence that perhaps I helped to make happen. And which is happening right now in what looks like Father Rabinowitz’s most private office.”

CHAPTER 20

To Boris went the job of finding a way into the room where Father Rabinowitz was talking with a still silent “Giovanni”, and failing that, to fend off whoever else wanted entry to the building. To Seana fell the tasks of collecting dead rats, what seemed to be ricin-soaked Communion wafers, and to remain alive to tell whoever would listen about the unanswered ‘whys’. Like why Carlos was dead four days after receiving his only Communion in four years. Why Tasha, Vladimir’s nurse-practitioner, and the Old Professor’s daughter, was deceased as well. And, in the likely event that Boris didn’t return, to take care of his son, Vladimir and to not raise him in the tradition of his NYPD father and KGB grandfather.

Listening and watching, in the line of duty rather than cowardess, Seana’s Newfoundland-village mind was opened to a world that no Newfy, or for that matter, New York crime writer could ever imagine. She recorded the events in Father Rabinowitz’s very private library with as much accuracy as she could, putting down on paper what she thought, or hoped, would be the most important, and redeeming.

“Giovanni?” Rabinowitz repeated again and again to the man whose back was turned to her. The Good father tried every subtext known to man, and woman, while voicing his name in an attempt to make him talk.. Interestingly, employing the main emotions within the Five Element cycle used by acupuncturists and investigated for validity by Newfoundland-born fisherman daughters who were naïve enough to think that scientific research was about finding answers to problems that would actually help people. The sometimes good, sometimes bad, and as the ‘interrogation’ went on, increasingly ugly Father would say “Giovanni” in the inquisitive, declarative then imperative tense. Each trio was backed by ‘Heart-Fire Laughter’, ‘Spleen-Earth Sympathy’, ‘Lung-Metal Grief’, ‘Kidney-Water Fear’ and finally ‘Liver-Wood Anger’, the latter doubling as Depression when turned inward, something the self-taught Freudian Rabbi-turned-Priest seemed to be most adapt at.

After eight escalating rounds with matching gestures worthy of a psychotherapist trained at the London School of Theatre.... nothing from ‘Giovanni’, man who seemed to have excessive body weight around his midline and an even heavier burdon between his ears, by the way he hung his head. A glimpse of his eyes through a mirror revealed a man overloaded with loss, guilt and sorrow so intense that the wrinkles in his face seemed to freeze. That kind of ‘nothing’ which Seana saw so many times in corpses of people who had died with the worse kind of

regret and loss. The kind which, perhaps, could be redeemed by confessing to God, or a person believed to be His representative. But still, "Giovanni" remained catatonic. Deader than dead, with all the pain the last moments of life could inflict on a Soul.

At the sound of the fourth car coming onto the street, then stopping, Rabinowitz collected his thoughts. He looked at bookshelf containing what looked like well-read copies of Howard Stern's Private Parts, the Bagavadad Gita, the Torah, the Kaballah, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Das Capital and Mein Kamph. A 'bleep' that sounded like it could have been a siren forced him into throwing the books on the floor, retrieving a picture behind it. A young, blonde haired woman in a miniskirt and denim jacket with a sexy body and a smile which was warm rather than slutty. A very noticable Cross around her neck which highlighted breasts worthy of a hooker but with eyes that showed a real beauty that came from the inside. A beautiful, young Soul who looked familiar.

The picture Seana found in or around every Roselli's that died. Sometimes on in the recesses of their pockets, but always someplace around the hospital room where they died---after having had Last Rights, no doubt, as God Fearing Catholics.

"You know her, Giovanni?" Father Rabinowitz inquired. "You KNOW HER, GIOVANNI ROSELLI????!!!" he yelled, without any professionalism or manipulation while sticking the photo into Giovanni's face.

The still-alive Elder of the family who, according to Boris' accounts, always spoke softly and last at every family dinner or business lunch turned around. He nodded 'yes'. Tears came poured out of his eyes, streaming down the deepened wrinkles in his face. The strongest and most detached boss of the Roselli mob cringed into a fetal position and grabbed hold of Rabinowitz's leg. "Her death is on my hands, Father. My nephew's hands on her throat, my son's bullet into her chest, my.... "

"...Other son's penis in her..." the Good Father said with an ugly but detached professionalism in his voice as his body went through the motions of hugging the patient-parishioner.

"I didn't plan to make it happen. I didn't want it to happen. But...it happened. I'm the...Captain of my ship, and...and..."

"...You lament the deaths of your crew, Giovanni." Rabinowitz added, as if he had the script pre-written in his head. "And you are, were, their Captain. Their protectors. Their..."

"God killed them because of...because of..." Giovanni's throat choked. "It was an accident."

"Yes, it probably was," the Priest said. "It most probably was, my Son."

Giovanni pulled himself up onto his knees. "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. Bless me Father for I have sinned," he repeated again and again, each plea more desperate, and lonely as he related the pain of losing nephews, sons and brothers. With every ounce of pain Giovanni seemed to feel, another pound of something from Rabinowitz which was not in keeping with any Freudian psychotherapy manual or Divinity School training course---personal satisfaction. Rabinowitz turned around, put on a sterile glove and reached into a locked box behind a chemistry manual and a plant which by its shape had to be ricinus communis. From the box he retrieved a Communion Wafer, stained brown, as were the ones near the rats who had met their demise in the passageways connecting what now seemed like a Church that had more rooms in it than any of the Parishioners realized.

"No!!! Don't!" Seana screamed as Rabinowitz said the appropriate blessings in Latin, then placed the Communion wafer onto Giovanni's lips, moving it towards he kneeling Parishioner's tongue. Then---three gunshots from outside or perhaps inside. Giovanni pulled away from Rabinowitz, grabbed hold of his gun, and shot out the South basement Window, and was shot dead from a well aimed shot from the West window. Rabinowitz said a prayer over him, knelt down, placed the picture of the woman on the wall, and took a fistful of Communion Wafers into his own hand.

“Diane... The woman who made me become a Christian, then a Catholic, then made me feel like a man, even when I was a Priest,” he recalled with a mournful yet joyous smile. “It is time for us to be reunited,” he continued. in the name of the Father, Son and Holy... Whatever It, He, or She is.”

Seana had never seen a Priest give himself Communion and the Last Rights. It would be an ugly death, but Rabinowitz wanted to be alone. He locked the door behind him, tore the crucifix off the wall and kissed ‘goodbye’ to Jesus, his closest friend of Spirit. As for friends in life, another picture, of Carlos and himself boasting a fish caught in front of a New Jersey Toxic control plant. The fish had three eyes, but the ocular portholes of the two fishermen could not have revealed more pride, friendship and love.

“I am sorry, Carlos. I didn’t want to do it... The dose I gave you was supposed to work quickly, and painlessly... But you got too close to what was supposed to be a...” Rabinowitz never completed his sentence. Blood oozed out of his mouth. The demons within him did not leave without a fight, and without making him convulse in ways neither Nature nor God designed to happen.

CHAPTER 21

By the time Seana found the front door to Father Rabinowitz’s private office and what seemed to be a well-equipped ricin manufacturing lab next to it, it was over. He lay dead on the man who the killings seemed to be all about. In his blood-soaked hand lay Diane’s picture with eight circles on the back. The first six were checkmarked ‘complete’ with a pen, letters above them. The seventh circle, a ‘GR’, had a mark of his own blood inside it. The eighth remained open, a letter from an alphabet she didn’t recognize on top of it. But as for what could be read, each had an ‘R’ as the second or last letter.

R for Roselli, she noted to herself, observing with the more vulnerable part of her brain that Boris was still not around. AMP, VRP and FCP did make sense. Anthony Michael, Vito Richard and Frank ‘Catherine’, she surmised for number one, three and six, thankful that she had as good a memory for formidable first names. But the other initials didn’t match what was in the newspapers Carlos read to her at the morgue nor the birth certificates she obtained on her own time after carving up the bodies. “LAR, PAL, and FUK”, she said with photo of Diane in a now very firm and determined hand. “They don’t match the other Roselli victims, or assholes, who died from ricin on ‘Good Friday’ after getting communion on Sunday.”

“Lorenzo Alfred Roselli, Paul Anthony Lombardi and Franz Unesco Klein, a Jewish wannabe-Guido accountant working for the family who became the real deal after he married into it.” Boris offered as he limped into the room, his jacket soaked with blood, his mouth teeth more red than white. “Some of the names real. Some of them they used amongst themselves. And if you ask me how I got that information, ‘mi rotas’ for now. Greek for ‘don’t ask for your good, mine, and...’”

Seana couldn’t resist hugging Boris, something that was painful physically and emotionally. “Are you alright?”

“The blood between my teeth is my own... most of it anyway,” he slurred out of the left side of his mouth.

“Where the fuck were you!” she begged, asked then demanded to know.

Boris let Seana’s embrace run its course then picked up the photo of the smiling maiden.

“The motive,” Doctor Ryan noted. “Diane.”

“Helen of Troy. Diane of Flatbush.”

“You know her!” Seana screamed. “You know her and you didn’t tell me anything, you goddamn son of a bitch!”

“I knew her from ANOTHER investigation!”

“One of those murders that you guys are supposed to keep unsolved, right?”

“It was a low priority investigation, that I was pulled off of as soon as I got on it, Doctor Ryan,” Boris said with gritted teeth that held back a primal scream.

“Did she get killed after she got raped, or before, Detective Fedoroff?”

“How did you know she got raped, Seana?” he asked with a mouth open in shock.

“Mi rotas, Detective,” Seana smirked. “But I could reveal some information to you about it all if you tell me about this...” She pointed to the last letters on the last, still open, circle, then opened the Kabala on Father Rabinowitz’s book shelf. “It looks like some kind of Hebrew letter. And the Kabala is supposed to be about the Divine Truth within the Hebrew alphabet. The last drop of blood never quite reached the circle. Maybe this symbol he wrote, by the writing well after he wrote the Roselli initials, is referring to himself and he---”

“---It’s not a suicide note,” Boris interjected. “It’s Russian. Old Russian. ‘Ivan the Terrifically Terrible’ it says. The most ruthless ruler in our history, who was called back from exile by the same people who suffered under his iron hand.”

“Or Ivan Minskov?” Seana surmised.

“Who shoots his enemies...at the base of the neck.” Boris added, noting the location of the bullet hole in Giovanni. “He claims it makes them suffer a little longer than just shooting them in the head. And it makes less of a mess for the jailers to clean up afterwards.”

“But how did Ivan Minskov know he was here?” Seana’s inquiry, searching for the circular through-line on the cluster of dots that felt connected.

“He didn’t. But I knew Giovanni was here. Or might be, on this Sunday night before another Good Friday that we seemed to make happen earlier.”

“Another ‘mi rotas’ I wasn’t supposed to know about,” Seana spat back. But Boris seemed more concern with the cluster in his own ever-hurting head than the dots on Dr. Ryan’s life or death puzzle.

“But that I did tell one Greek who I suspected, or maybe should have warned...” the unthinkable fell across Boris’ shocked and betrayed face.

“Greek who what...Greek who what!!!!?”

“A Greek who we have to see right now, after we...!” Boris snapped photos of the chemical equipment in the storage closet, grabbed hold of the box containing the brown stained communion wafers, anything that looked like it was chemical information and everything powdered, liquid or solid that seemed potentially lethal. He ripped the fire extinguisher off the wall and blew the flame repellent powder around the lab and its components, lit a match, then shuffled Seana out the door.

“What are you doing?”

“Nuclear disarmament,” he said with a guilt-ridden look on his face. “Before it is too late for ALL of us.”

CHAPTER 22

Detective Seargent Jimmy Pappas' studio apartment in Astoria was officially rented to Dimitri Pappadapolous. When 'the wife' was away, or dealing with her 'woman issues', he would have football parties in front of the big screen TV, which he said was bought legally, in which hot babes, which he said had legal working papers, would serve beer to his guests. When a hard case was over, or lost, he would go there alone to 'think'. Though Boris was always told it was to get drunk, it was as much about banging holes in the walls or punch himself in the belly, or in the murders involving Diane and others that went unsolved or unpunished, to cry tears for the dead who couldn't cry for themselves.

"You sure he's here," Seana asked Boris as they finally trudged themselves and the relevant evidence before the 'accidental' fire at the Church up to the fifth floor. "The door seems..."

"...Unlocked. And open," Boris whispered. He took out his gun, gently pushed Seana into safe cover and eased his way in.

Seana waited for seconds that felt like hours. Emotions of fear, anger, regret, grief and hope competed for domination of her aching head. Made even more intense by dawn approaching, the hard glare of sunlight from the broken windows in the hall penetrating through her bloodshot eyes. Added to all those 'what ifs'. What if she had been more fastidious and discrete with following up on the autopsies at the morgue? What if she had kept Carlos out of conspiracy land? What if she had told Boris to fuck off when he came into her safe, sterile lab, and life?

It was Russian, but the subtext was all too clear in any language. "Oh my God," her heart translated from Boris' mouth. Taking the initiative, Seana entered the room.

There, in front of her, dead flesh in an easy chair just above beer bottles which reeked of something very different than beer. And the pupils constricted, not dilated as was the case with most natural and the predominant majority of trauma-induced deaths. Mouth filled with saliva like drooling dog shot in the middle of eating a mouth-watering meal, the remnants of something solid in the human dead dog's mouth and the bottle just under his lifeless hand.

"Organophosphates, or some variety of such." Seana postulated as the the manner of death of Jimmy Pappas as Boris sought more Spiritual solutions to it all. "I'll get some samples and..."

Boris held Seana back and advanced to the dead corpse, sitting next to him. He took a ring from his pocket and placed it onto Jimmy's wedding finger, then kissed his hand goodbye. He seemed to say something in Russian, a prayer that begged, then demanded that God look after his departed friend. Then, words of reason to his old friend.

"A man can't serve two Masters. But Jimmy...serving three? The NYPD, yourself, and..."

“We need evidence to nail and STOP whoever....” Seana advanced hoping and praying that she was wrong.

Boris held up his hand, and took out a gold pen containing a Russian inscription from Jimmy’s pocket and wrote something on the back of a book of matches from the “Cat Walk” Escort service laying on the table. “The ‘what’ you will probably find in those bottles, and in him.”

Seana recognized the compound all too well from the elective Course in Bioterrorism back at Newfoundland Medical College, an easy A at the time for ‘theoreticals’ which seemed impossible at the time. “Serin,” she concluded. “But someone made him drink it. Someone who we are BOTH going to see!” she affirmed.

Boris looked like he was about to fend her off with another story about the Old Country, or another Proverb from the Steppes. But he was running out of stories, options and friends. “Of course, Seana. Doctor Ryan,” he said.

CHAPTER 23

All the lunch hour tables at the dimly-lit Golden Tiger had Reserved signs on them and empty chairs, except one in the middle of the floor.

“How the fuck are we supposed to eat this rabbit food with these?” Three hundred pound Little Tony Roselli said of the chopsticks in front of him tastefully placed around a plate of pork chow mein, snowpeas and freshly warmed up rice.

“You came to talk, not eat, you fat Italian pig,” Alexi Minskov spat back, taking his chopsticks in hand and demonstrating how it is done, marveling at how well the food tasted to his famished Italian guests.

Little Tony tried to demonstrate his skills with the chopsticks but wound up spilling most of the very hot specially-ordered House Special onto his crotch before it got close to his mouth.

Ivan ‘the Terrific’ Minskov sipped the house tea, a bitter mizture that contained a lemon mixture with was salty to even the most Slavic palate. He smirked at his Olive skinned dinner companions with a cultural superiority Russians did to everyone else who wasn’t Russian.

Vincent watched and listened as the never-miss-a-meal Little Tony finally gave up and grabbed the food with his hands, pushing it down his mouth. With nothing but brawn left in the Roselli organization, someone had to be the brains. Honor and survival demanded it. Protocol required that he come to the meeting, as it was Giovanni’s order. The last order before he wound up dead in a Fire which took out Father Rabinowitz as well, according to the newspaper reports. He looked at the names under the reservations and seemed a bit suspicious.

“You think he knows that we reserved all of the tables?” Seana nervously asked from the kitchen window.

“No more than he knows that I forged the letter from Giovanni that got him here,” Boris said. “Copying someone’s handwriting and signature is what we Russians learn how to do before we know how to sign our own name,” he boasted.

Seana looked at another plate of food going out to the group, carried by an Asian Waiter whose knowledge of the English Language and American Culture was geared exclusively towards getting extra tips and negotiating for a cheap, discrete place to rent. “Smells...good, and---”

“---Spiced only with natural ingredients,” Boris said as he paid off the cook and took over his culinary tasks with a fist full of American and Chinese dollars.

“You know what you are doing.”

“Of course, Doctor Ryan,” he smiled sardonically. “Now, how much cabbage and borch goes into egg foo yung?”

“The kind that grows bodies, not the kind that destroys tissue!” Seana insisted.

“Or the kind that---“ Boris silenced Seana’s accusations about spiking the food with something that would kill off the Russian and Italian Mobsters outside with a firm holding up of his hand, then pointing at a waiter who came in with a plate of food, fill. “They no want.”

“Yes, I knew that... Thank you,” Boris said with a Buddhist bow, then dishing out another large platter of food from the stove. “They want this,” Boris told him. “Make muscles strong”, he continued, pointing to his chest, then crotch.

The waiter smiled, then delivered the food as ordered.

“And if they believe that...” Seana said, noting that the kitchen was empty. “I have a bridge to sell them for---”

“---Perception becomes reality. And...” Boris smiled, then put his thumbs up. “Yes! Yes! Alexi loves his noodles, brocholi and garlic!”

Seana’s mouth dropped. There was Alexi, choking, sweating, shaking.

“I need Doctor here! I need Doctor!” Ivan demanded.

Little Tony started to belch, barf and turn pale white. The rail-thin Big Tony was the first to come to his defense, doing all he could to push the rest of what was in his belly out of him. “Get a fucking Doctor, you chink Fuck! Doctor! Doctor!” he screamed out.

“Your cue, Doc,” Boris said, handing her a plate of fortune cookies, then counting down from ten on his watch.

“Our incarceration, shame and damnation to hell if this this doesn’t---“

Two seconds before the appointed time, Ivan’s screams became more intense, desperate and real. Boris nodded his head. Seana put on her waitress smock and wheeled out the cart of delicacies.

In her best Jerry Lewis Oriental Merchant imitation, she took the covers off the gustatory masterpieces worthy of a the Five Star Establishment. “We have...Serin Surprise. Anthrax Almondine. Hemlock Roast Ham. And...”

It was Vincent’s gun that found its way onto Seana’s throat first. “What the fuck is going on here!” he grunted as the mobsters who were sick were being tended to by those who were. “What the fuck is going on!”

“Justice,” Boris said, emerging from the kitchen.

“You poisoned my brother!” Big Tony ranted.

“And my son!” Ivan grunted.

“Nature never gives you a problem without a solution, gentlemen,” Boris said. With that he removed the fortune cookies, each pre-labeled for its patient, from Seana’s pocket and threw them into the air. Ian ran to retrieve Alexi’s, Big Tony stumbled through the closely arranged tables to get the one designed for his brother. Vincent held his gun firmly on the Doctor.

“They die, she dies!”

“And the Army of people we still have making and serving you gentlemen food?” Boris said. “Some time, some place, some where, everyone’s gotta eat. And everyone’s gotta die in...” Twenty seconds, by my caculations.

“Under the tongue!” Seana screamed out.

Ivan crushed the cookie and placed it under his son Alexi’s tongue according to instructions. Big Tony rammed Little Tony’s cookie into his oversized, hyper-salivating mouth. Within seconds, they breathed air rather than

vomit. Within a minute they could sit upright Within two minutes they could kneel and give thanks to the people, and Deity, that saved them from death.

“Their first time?” Boris asked.

“First to be poisoned, you dead piece of shit!” Vincent screamed out, cocking the hammer of his gun at Boris.

“First time facing death, you idiot. And virgin. Who hasn’t been fortunate enough to face the abyss. And who probably doesn’t have balls, brains or heart, to survive it,” Boris replied, calmly.

Vincent let go of Seana and lowered his gun, then looked at the half eaten Chinese Breadsticks by his place at the dinner table. Seana grabbed the gun from his shaking hand.

“I’d recommend a diet. A no carb, low fat, no meat diet. Not any meat that you killed, anyway,” Boris said.

“Or tortured, in some way of another,” Seana added.

“And my fortune cookie?” Ivan mused, the rest of his discourse halted by a burning in his esophagus and a hole in his stomach that made him double over in pain. “For the sake of your father, Boris. You are my Godson...” he forced out of his mouth.

“Who should have obeyed God rather than his father, and Godfather.” Boris crumbled retrieved another cookie from Seana’s jacket. He opened it. “Ah, your fortune, destiny, and legacy.”

Boris showed Ivan an empty piece of paper as Ivan’s put his hands over his now sightless eyes. “You’re blind, so I’ll read it for you.....It says ‘nothing’...’nothing’ ‘empty’ ‘white that is complete darkness’”

“I can’t see...Alexi I can’t see...Come...”

Alexi’s feet were stopped by Boris’ hands, his mouth silenced by his very-off duty Russian Army revolver pointed into his mouth. “He’s busy with his own life now, I’m afraid.” The clairvoyantly mad Detective laughed. “I’m afraid? No YOU are afraid now, Ivan Basili Vldadimir Minskov. For the first time in your life YOU are afraid. And alone. Like Tasha, my son’s nurse and my Chemistry Professor’s daughter was when you killed her. Alone like my wife, Elena, whose name you never bothered to pronounce right, who died in that ‘traffic accident’ that disappeared from EVERYone’s investigation files.. Alone like my son was after he lost his mother. And so many other sons after you killed their fathers, and mothers when you were working for the KGB, your father’s Black Market Bosses, and the man who used to be my boss, my father, Goddamn and help me. And like you are now. Scared, alone and hearing the last words you hear about your...”

Ivan put his hands on his aching ears. “I can’t hear!” he screamed. “I can’t see!”

“Father!” Alexi reached out to his screaming, sightless and deaf father.

“He can’t hear you, ‘son’,” Boris said, emptied the shots from Vincent’s gun at the walls, then three from his own, putting everyone else onto the floor, leaving Ivan wandering around hearing voices only from his own past as a master torturer whose only experience with pain himself was a hangnail or occasional papercut from the forms used to justify his cruelty to the law. “One bullet left, son.” Boris said, handing it over to Alexi. “Use it wisely.”

Alexi took in a deep breath of deperation then breathed out a blast of anger. “You cure him!” he repeated again and again to Boris, then Seana, then God as his father’s ghosts haunted him in the worst ways imaginable. “You cure him!” Seana closed her eyes when the barrel came into her face for the third and what she felt like would be the final time, for Alexi and herself.

“We’re all out of fortune cookies, Alexi.” Boris said. “You’ll just have to---“

Seana closed her eyes as the shot came out of the Russian Army revolver. Boris kept his open. Alexi fell upon the floor on his dead father. Boris tried to comfort him. The weeping Alexi screamed back a curse in Russian.

Big Tony helped Little Tony out the door. Vincent picked up his empty gun and placed it in the belt around his now urine-soaked trousers. "We'll talk, Detective," he said with whatever 'tough guy' was still left in him as he followed.

"What do I do now?" Alexi said. "What the fuck do I do now?"

"Make it as right as any of us can, Alexi. For what's left of your family, and mine."

"I kill you." He grunted, grabbing hold of a broken chair.

"Why?" Boris answered. "We're all even. What's left of my family is still alive. What's left of your family is still alive. We don't have the same values, but we co-exist."

"A Cold War," Alexi surmised, already taking on his father's arrogance and decree of authority.

"Beats a hot one, and final one," Boris answered.

The traffic from Chinatown to Uptown was bumper to bumper. Boris and Seana had nothing to say to each other. They had known each other's Souls, each not sure if buying out of their own lonely lives into the other's would fill the gap of 'empty' or just make it more painful. But there was one matter which did need tending to.

A boy in a Mets baseball cap, Levi's jeans and Cossack boots sat outside the door of Seana's office as Seana and Boris laid down the overloaded evidence bags, papers that retrieved 'lost' legal documents which might be read by someone on the moral side of the law, and a brief case containing a pre-signed letter of resignation handwritten by the Canadian immigrant who now just wanted to go home, even though she knew she never could.

"Someone who looked important left this for you," the lad she recognized all too well said, pointing to the envelope posted on the 'Gone Fishing' sign on the door that still bore her name.

"Thank you, Vladimir," her reply as she watched Boris explain to the lad why he was away for so long in Russian. Some of the explanations seemed to be accepted, others rejected, others not understood. But there was no misunderstanding about the note in Seana's hand outside the now-vacant office she once called home. "They moved me...Upstairs," she said of the message that felt accomplished, and scared.

"So they could watch you more closely, I suspect," Boris answered.

"Or maybe I could watch them," she found herself asserting as she noted Vladimir accepting Boris' outstretched hand of truce, emerging into a hug of mutual forgiveness. "Or maybe WE could watch them."

Boris said something in Russian, appended by Vladimir.

"Which means?" she asked.

"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance" Boris said.

"And regarding stealing mottos from other cultures," she noted of the French Philosopher's quote that was claimed as uniquely American by the Founding Fathers.

"You steal what works, and makes it your own," Vladimir smiled back at her, then his father. "Right, Dad?"

"Ask your..." Boris answered, finding himself at a crossroads of his own. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a rubber band. "Ask your...mother," he said, wrapping the elastic rubber around Seana's fourth digit on her left hand, loosely.

Vladimir grabbed hold of the third digit on Seana's right hand, with a grip that felt strong, and healthy, perhaps if the medications she had investigated privately really did work, cured. But as for the matter of the lad demonstrating his new-found health on the finger used to give the Bronx salute. "He's stopping me from giving you a 'screw off' answer, Boris," she replied.

"He's his father's son," Boris smiled back, without any hidden agendas this time.

"Da," Seana answered in the very affirmative tense. "Da".